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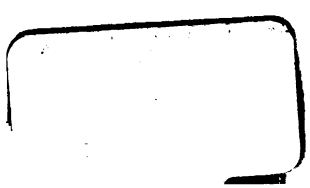

THE MIRZA.

VOL. I.

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BY

JAMES Justinian MORIER, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF "HAJJI BABA," "ZOHRAB," "AYESHA," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE MIRZA.

INTRODUCTION.

ALTHOUGH the Persians cannot be complimented upon their morality, as a nation, yet no one can deny that they abound in a lively wit, a social disposition, and in qualities which fit them to be agreeable companions. The Englishman, bred up in reverence of truth, in love of justice, and in admiration of every thing that constitutes good government, with a strict sense of honour, and a quick impulse to uphold his rights as an independant man, remains perfectly astonished and incredulous at all he sees and hears, when first he finds himself an inhabitant of an Asiatic state. In Persia particularly, where truth and falsehood are upon equal terms, where a man to

live, must practice deceit, where the meaning of the word honour is not to be defined, and where there is no government but such as emanates from caprice or despotism, there his astonishment and disgust are complete, although, at the same time, should he have any turn for humour, he cannot help being amused at the ingenuity of the wiles exercised, at the light-hearted levity, and apparent clown and pantaloon philosophy with which evils, such as the Englishman would call great, are supported.

During my stay in that country, which took place during the reign of the late King, Fatteh Ali Shah, I became acquainted with many Persians of various ranks and denominations, from the King on the throne, to the lowest tent-pitcher and muleteer. At first, I felt as any other of my countrymen would feel; I was startled by their unceasing adulation, and petrified by their unblushing falsehoods, however pleased I might be with their winning manners; but as I became more acquainted with the genius and character of the nation, I learnt to place a more proper value upon

their professions, and to give a truer interpretation to their assertions, for I found much of the disgust which I had at first felt, proceeded from their forms of speech, which I can compare to nothing better than to a redundant paper currency, which begins by being of doubtful value, and ends by being worth nothing at all. How would it surprise Mr. A if riding with Mr. B. in the park, Mr. A. praising the beauty of his companion's horse, Mr. B. were immediately to say—"You do me honour —it is a present to you—it belongs to you forthwith—I will send it to you." And if, in utter confusion, Mr. A. felt himself bound to accept it, how much more surprized would he be to hear Mr. B. turn round and make the same present and the same speech to the next person who should happen equally to praise his horse! So it is in Persia. This sort of intercourse takes place on every common occurrence, and it would be deemed ill breeding, and a want of knowledge of life, if the language of falsehood, flattery and hyperbole, were not used the more abundantly, the more in consonance with the character of the people.

The Persians have aptly been called the Frenchmen of the East; vanity is, in truth, their besetting sin, and that circumstance alone may, perhaps, account for the lust for compliment and adulation which exists in both nations.

Among those who formed part of the Shah's court, I became intimately acquainted with a Mirza, one eminently ingenious, who, had he possessed the advantage of an enlightened education, in addition to his natural acquirements, would not have failed to distinguish himself in the world. He was in person, tall and ungainly, with no regularity of features, and possessing, what in a Persian's estimation is absolute deformity—a scanty beard. But he had a thoughtful cast of countenance, a large and full eye, with much sweetness of expression. His good sense becoming an antidote to the poison of an Asiatic education, made him see and deplore the great defects of his countrymen, and he frequently entered into very confidential confessions, respecting the acts and proceedings of some of the higher powers of the state. I make no doubt, had he lived

in England, he would have become an excellent reformer, so quick was he in discovering an abuse. I strongly believe he was but a sceptical Mahommedan; but whatever might be the case in that respect, he freely owned that there could be no hope for his nation, but in a total and subverting change. Notwithstanding this, he was in the enjoyment, if not of a very lucrative, at least, of a very exclusive situation at the court of the Shah, for he was the Poet Royal, with the title of Melek al Shohera, or Prince of Poets, a distinction acquired principally by his exquisite talent of lauding the King. His facility in the act of versification was great, and the fertility of his invention unbounded. One of his most successful feats in applying the powers of his flattery, was the composition of an historical poem, descriptive of the reign of his Royal patron, which he called the History of the King of Kings, we must suppose as a tacit triumph over the celebrated Shah Nameh, or the History of Kings, by Ferdûsi.

In proportion as our intimacy increased, I discovered how great were his powers of in-

vention, which in addition to the composition of poetry, I found to consist in the faculty of relating extemporaneous stories.

He informed me, that during the journeys which the Shah made on horseback, either on military or hunting expeditions, he was frequently called upon, in order to beguile the tedium of the road, to entertain him with stories, which he invented and related on the spot, adapting their nature and tendency to the exigency of the moment. I was much struck with this circumstance, as being highly characteristic of oriental life, and of the power of an Eastern King, who orders a story to be related as he would order a palace to be built; it also threw a light upon what might possibly be the originating cause of that succession of stories so much prized even in Europe, namely, the Arabian Night's Entertainments, and, consequently, I became extremely desirous to hear stories so fabricated. I did not hesitate to make my wishes known to my friend, who with that amiability of character for which he was conspicuous, assured me that he would be happy to indulge my curiosity at the very

first opportunity. Indeed, forgetting for a moment all that we had been agreed upon as to the vice of hyperbole, and the deceitfulness of words, he said—"May your shadow never be less!—You do me honour!—I am your slave! Let me be less than the least before you. Whatever little wit exists in your slave's understanding, it shall be exercised at your bidding! Bismillah, in the name of Allah, come—my house is your house, and my wit is your wit."

I was not slow in taking advantage of his invitation. It was agreed that I should first visit him at his own house, and that then we should meet as opportunities might offer. It was necessary that times and places should be studied, for as he was supposed to be always ready at the command of his Majesty, with his wit in full vigour, so he was obliged to apologise that he could not make a positive engagement, without inserting a clause to that effect. Indeed, as we continued to discuss this scheme, he appeared much charmed at the prospects of pleasure and advantage which it was likely to afford to him

personally. He said, that he had long felt the want of a rehearsal to a story; that such an exercise before he went to the Shah would be of the greatest advantage to him; that thus he might acquire a stock of stories, which he could draw upon at will, and being fore-armed, would never be at a loss—"For, alas!" added he, "wit is treacherous; my brain is sometimes as dry as an exhausted water melon, and nothing is left therein but some miserable seeds, which will never sprout, water them as I may."

Then, in his discourse, he would for ever intermingle effusions of poetry and poetic allusions, making large quotations, and this he frequently did from his own works, prefacing such quotations, by saying—"See how well I expressed myself! *bah bah bah!* how beautifully I have written!"

I determined to avail myself of these opportunities, in order to obtain a more perfect insight into the manners and modes of thinking of the people among whom I was living, endeavouring to preserve the spirit, if not the letter, of such stories as I might hear from the

lips of my friend. To render them agreeable to European readers, I felt would require much emendation, for Easterns are prolix, and my friend the Mirza was not the reverse. I found, that in common conversation, ideas flowed so quick in succession, that he had no sooner given birth to one, than another arose, of which he could not refrain giving me the full benefit. Therefore shunning the rock he was apt to split upon, I determined to adopt him as my beacon, and steer my way as clear from the shoals of prolixity as possible.

VISIT I.

It having been determined that my first visit should take place on a Wednesday, that being, according to Persian superstition, a fortunate day, a *rúzi sefid*, or a white day; accordingly, accompanied by my pipe-bearer, who carried my kalian, I proceeded to the house of my friend to keep my appointment. It was situated in a cheerful part of the city, enjoying the shade of a chenar tree, at the foot of which flowed a running stream, a gift so much prized by Persians in general, and by my Mirza, in particular, that he did not cease giving me hints shewing forth his delight at the neighbourhood of the tree and the rivulet, and thus persuading me of his felicity.

I found his house as small as poets' habitations frequently are; and judging from the smallness of his establishment, concluded that his means were on a similar scale. However, it is true in

this, as in other cases, that no compensation can be greater for poverty of circumstances than richness of intellect, and I felt, during the time I passed in my friend's company, that this truth was exemplified, for he led me to understand that he was a contented man, which explained why he was a cheerful one. He made the most of the few comforts he had about him. The room in which we sat, opened to the air with a broad sash, looking into a small court, where a fountain in miniature threw up its waters was, he assured me a perfect room, and that it faced the true Kebleh. His carpets, which appeared to be common felts, much worn, he asserted had once belonged to Shah Abbas's poet, therefore sitting upon them ought to engender poetry; and when we drank coffee, there was something curious in the coffee itself, as well as something worth remarking in the cups. His tobacco, he affirmed, was true Shiraz; the enamelled portrait of the houri on his pipe heads, he hinted, had been made from his own designs, and the couplets, in which allusion was made to smoke as an emblem of the vanity of life, he pointed

out as one of his happiest efforts at an epigram. Then he exhibited choice bits of penmanship, a whole ode of Hafiz, written by the hand of Shireen Kalem, the first artist of his day, and part of the Gulistan of Sadi, written by one who he asserted had been often paid a miscal of gold for every line he transcribed.

My friend was, indeed, so full of the blessings he possessed, both mental and physical, that I was obliged gradually to wean him from the pleasure he evidently enjoyed in describing them, and urged him to begin that story which it had been the object of my visit to hear. I was obliged, however, still to have patience, for he started when he heard the voice of the Muezzin from the summit of a neighbouring mosque, calling the faithful to prayers; and being, in the forms at least, a good mussulman, he retired to his praying carpet spread for him in a corner, leaving me to exercise as much patience as I could, until the ceremony was over; when, refreshed by the exercise, my friend again seated himself, and exclaiming, "*Bismillah*, in the name of Allah," he at once began as follows :

SHAH ABBAS, HIS JESTER AND THE MAN WITH ONE THUMB.

In the reign of Shah Abbas the great, Persia was indeed a kingdom; and why? because it really possessed a king. He was not like one of those miserable sovereigns we see now a days with little power, less importance, and no dignity, who live only to amass treasure for themselves, keeping their subjects in abject poverty.. No—he was liberal and magnificent in his projects as well as in his actions. His enjoyment consisted in seeing his people prosperous and happy, and he watched over their safety as a father does over his family, or as the elder of a tribe over his encampment. His name is still in the mouth of every Persian, from the first khan to the lowest muleteer: the stranger can scarcely travel a step without being shewn some mosque erected by his piety, some caravanserai built for the purposes of hospitality, or some aqueduct planned for the public good.

With all this, he had one great fault:—he was extremely suspicious and consequently jealous.

He was only great in the eyes of the world, for in truth he was often a prey to petty passions which led to the most nefarious acts.

It was during one of those fits of suspicion that he put to death his eldest son the heir to his throne, Sefi Mirza, an act which he never ceased to deplore, and which so embittered every moment of his existence, that he became a prey to melancholy. His courtiers scarcely ventured to approach him—his temper, which before this act had always been sufficiently open and affable, now became sour and morose, and like the beast of prey, which having once tasted blood longs for more, so after having been guilty of this one great crime, he became cruel and blood-thirsty, and perpetrated many others of similar character.

The grand vizier of the time, a man of wisdom, was not slow in foreseeing the misery which this fatal propensity in his royal master would bring upon the country, and he did not cease night and day thinking how he might avert the impending evil. He felt that he himself, as well as the principal

omrahs and officers of the court, were in danger of becoming victims to the Shah's suspicions, and he determined to confer with them in secret upon the best method of arresting the calamity.

He was persuaded that the foundation of his majesty's character was benevolent, and, therefore, did not despair of giving it a new bias. He had known him social, open to the charms of wit and humour, and easily fascinated by the sallies of buffoonery.

Having called a secret meeting of the most influential men, and having collected them in one of the private apartments of his palace, he addressed them as follows:

"Something must be done, otherwise our lives are not safe, even for an hour. There is not one of us, who upon the least suspicion, may not receive the bastinado upon the soles of his feet. Our livers have been sufficiently dried up with apprehension, and our souls have been made to drink the waters of bitterness. Let us engender one vigorous thought, and be agreed upon what we had best do."

It was not necessary to make such an appeal

to men already sufficiently alive to the dangers which awaited them, and upon hearing the vizier's words they were unanimously applauded, and like birds apprehending a storm, seek shelter near the land, so they all looked up to the superior sagacity of the minister as their best security.

"In truth," said one, "this Shah is not the king we once knew him. The Shah of former days was full of mirth and good nature—now he is become a lion."

"What say you?" said another, "a lion?—a lion has feeling, a lion has the thought of a man —this is an animal that has not his equal in ferocity."

"*Bah! bah! bah!*" exclaimed a third shaking his head, "a wonderful youth was he when first he came to the throne! nothing like him had ever been seen: he had a heart then, and never would take away life except from necessity; he was then too good for a King of Persia—now he is too bad for a King of Jehanum."

"What shall we do then?" said a serious looking courtier, "the business is difficult; if Allah does not come to our aid, we shall be left

walking round our little fingers to the end of eternity." Then addressing himself to the grand vizier he said with a beseeching voice, "For God's sake, you who are the anchor of the state, and who are wise as Aflatoon, and who are the grand-father of Lokman, speak, and give freedom to our souls!"

"What can I say?" said the minister who all the while had been playing with his beads, and twisting the end of his beard with his fingers; "let us do something, for mercy's sake! I have been making a thought, Allah best knows whether it be good or bad; we, poor benighted mortals as we are, anxiously bestir ourselves to act according to our limited views, when destiny is, perhaps, ready to meet us face to face with something quite the reverse!"

"What is your thought? for the sake of Allah, speak!" exclaimed the assembly with one voice.

"My opinion is this," said the grand vizier, "that some attempt should be made to divert the Shah's mind from its present melancholy mood, and to turn it again into that channel which is its natural bent—I mean mirth and

humour. I have in my eye a burnt father of a jack-pudding, who would make even the blessed Hussein laugh, so thorough a master is he at the ridicule of the beard."

"You have opened my eyes," said one; "you mean Kaka Pembeh."

"You have said right," exclaimed a second, "oh the bankrupt dog!"

"There is not his equal," said a third; "such a mad fellow as he does not exist."

"I die of his jokes daily," roared another, "I faint when I see him."

"He is the man," said the vizier; "you have decided truly; your humble servant has thought that if we can throw this fellow into the Shah's path, without any appearance of design, that he will not fail to attract his majesty's attention, and should he once succeed in making him laugh, we shall again be enabled to put our caps on one side, and our mental agonies will be at an end."

"You have judged right," exclaimed the assembly, "wonderful thought has he made! marvellous vizier! Persian statesmen after

all! what is equal to them! such a lord of reflection has never before been seen!"

These and such like exclamations escaped from the lips of the assembled courtiers upon hearing the grand vizier's proposal; and they immediately agreed to place the whole conduct of the affair into his hands, with an expression of their readiness to further the scheme to the utmost of their power.

It was not long after this conference that the vizier sent for the individual in question, and with his usual ability proceeded, first to prepare his mind for the part he was to act, and then by a promise of proper rewards to secure him in his interest.

Kaka Pembeh, or Brother Cottonwool was a *sobriquet* given to him in consequence of his having negro blood in his veins, which exhibited itself prominently in the woolly nature of his hair and beard. Negroes are generally styled *Kaka* or brother, an appellation springing from a religious and charitable motive, but in this instance arising from a desire to make the buffoon more conspicuous, for in truth his name was Mahomed Ali, and his father was an Arab of Abusheher in the Persian gulf, but

it seems the mother's blood predominated, and hence his name. He was by nature cast into the mould of a buffoon and merry-andrew, his features denoted broad humour, and, consequently, his commonest speech produced a laugh. He was a man without malice, although nothing would arrest him were he deeply set upon a jest, and as it was the fashion to exercise practical jokes upon his person, so upon occasions he would return the compliment with interest. His early youth had been full of adventure, he having travelled far and wide through many parts of Asia.

He had been residing now some time at Ispahan a sort of hanger-on upon the houses of the great Khans about the court, of whose nightly assemblies he formed the principal charm, when he was fixed upon by the grand vizier to fulfil the part we have before mentioned. In his person he was short, having a large head, long hands and arms, bandy-legs, and broad feet; his nose was large and aquiline, his eyes were uncommonly brilliant, his beard scanty, and his ears enormous. His voice was loud and full of comic intonations, his laugh was pec-

toral, and his pathos came from the nose. Altogether, no one who was not decidedly a churl, could refrain from merriment the moment he opened his mouth to speak, although in truth he often said things which any one else might say without being remarked.

In an incredible short space of time, it is said, that the vizier's scheme succeeded; Kaka Pembeh had become as necessary to Shah Abbas as the air he breathed. The delight which his majesty found in having the melancholy of his thoughts diverted into a channel of mirth was so great, that his character appeared to be changed. The court, the city, the nation, in short, everything animate and inanimate throughout Persia, became directly or indirectly influenced by this alteration in the King's humour, and the buffoon was worshipped with almost divine honours. Under the sage guidance of the vizier, he led his royal master on by well-timed flattery, by familiarity tempered by servility, by broad humour directed by design, to do precisely what the minister desired, a circumstance which

mainly tended to draw off his Majesty's mind from affairs of state to occupy it with matters of minor importance.

Shah Abbas had been brought up in the belief common to Mahommedans, that madmen are influenced by a divine spirit, and as Kaka Pembeh was looked upon as one tinged with insanity, the King was ready to allow him the privileges due to his character. The Kaka had ingeniously made his majesty believe that the Shah in Persia was what Caliph Haroun al Raschid had been in Arabia, and thus led him on to interest himself in the same pursuits. Opening his heart one day, the King avowed that excitement and occupation were necessary in order to dispel that melancholy which was apt to prey upon his spirits, and, therefore, he desired him to go into the highways and byeways of his capital, and among his subjects search out objects whose histories might afford him amusement, and perchance call for his interference and protection.

The Kaka was overjoyed at this communication, for it was precisely the object to which the grand vizier had directed his views, and,

on that very day, he betook himself to the great high-road leading from the north of Persia to the capital, where he posted himself near the fountain which stands at the entrance of the city, by which caravans and travellers were wont to pass. Accompanied by a servant, he seated himself at about the hour of sunset among a group of others, who were come to await the arrival of their friends, and smoked his kalian to wile away the time. He had not sat long ere he heard distant bells announcing the approach of a caravan, and soon after it appeared accompanied by the usual travellers, and its mule and camel drivers; but he perceived no one with whom he might conveniently enter into conversation, until at the very tail of the procession, he discovered a way-worn, care-stricken individual dressed as a Mollah, whose dusty garments announced him fresh from a long journey, and who turned the tired beast which he bestrode to the fountain, where they both refreshed themselves by a draught. of which they appeared to be much in need.

Kaka Pembeh immediately approached and gave him the usual salutation of peace,

which the unhappy looking traveller answered with alacrity, as if charmed to have found any one who would take an interest in him.

"Whence come you?" said the Kaka.

"As Allah is great," said the traveller, with a sigh, "I come from afar. I come from Ardebil, and my soul is bitter."

"How is this," said the Kaka, looking at his Mollah's turban, "a servant of the blessed Prophet with a bitter soul! what news may this be?"

"So it is," said the traveller, "and what more can I say? The apple may look green on the tree, but if it be rotten inside it becomes unwholesome. The day was unlucky when I left Ardebil."

"What words are these," said the Kaka, with a look of surprise—"sit down for God's sake, and tell me your story—recollect this is the seat of government—here is a King, here justice is to be had. Men do not go about eating dirt at this rate, when a despotic Shah is at hand, ready to redress the wrongs of his subjects."

Upon which handing him his kalian, which

his servant had freshly prepared, the melancholy man first inhaling a long and welcome stream of smoke which seemed at once to soften his care, began as follows:

"I am a mollah of Ardebil—my name is Ahmed, and Mollah Ahmed is well known as one of the most zealous attendants at the tomb of the ever renowned Sheikh Sefi, upon whom be blessings. Your slave is the father of a daughter, and for his sins, of the most beautiful virgin that ever was created—a pearl, a rose, an angel, an houri of paradise—in short so perfect a creature was never before known—for his misfortune he became acquainted with one who called himself a man of God, but who in truth is a child of the devil. A wretch, who clothing himself as a priest, was in truth an impostor, and a brother of Satan, and who after exercising wiles and incantations, such only as a demon could practice, succeeded in deceiving my treasure of a daughter and running away with her. I hear he fled hitherwards, and I come to seek her. That is my story — what more can I say!"

"Allah! Allah!" exclaimed the Kaka, "this

is a bad business, Ispahan is a large city, and rogues abound. How are you to find your daughter?"

"What can I say," said the Mollah; "if my luck is good I may find her, if not, the world has turned its back upon me, and my soul will dry up."

"Have you any means of discovering the thief," said the Kaka musing. "Has he any particular mark by which he may be known?"

"He is not different from other men in the face," said the traveller, "excepting that he looks like the most artful of villains; he dresses like a man of the law, and is called the Mollah Kemgoo—his principal mark is that he has no thumb on his right hand, but he takes good care to keep that well concealed."

"God is great!" said the Kaka, "and what is more, merciful! let us trust in Him. Tell me where you are to be found, and who knows! destiny may have much good in store for you."

"I have been recommended to go to the caravanserai, the resort of the Tabriz merchants, and thither by the blessing of Allah I

will bend my steps, and if you can render me any assistance I am sure you are too good a Mussulman to refuse performing so praiseworthy an act."

"Upon my eyes be it," said Kaka Pembeh, as he rose and walked away, fully determined not to let so good an opportunity escape of interesting his royal master in the fate of an ill-used man, and inducing him to bring an offender to justice.

As soon as he appeared before Shah Abbas kneeling down and kissing the ground, he exclaimed :

"Your slave is an humble sacrifice to the Centre of the Universe—his luck is on the rise —he has met with a most fortunate misfortune, and his majesty may now defile the grave of a rogue's father to his heart's content."

"How is this, O little man!" exclaimed the Shah, "where have you been all this while—are your ears wooing the knife, or your feet the stick that you have kept the Shah waiting."

"By the soul of the King!" exclaimed the Kaka, "if the royal impatience is thirsting for blows, it may soon be requited by beating real

flesh and blood, instead of humble Cotton-wool." Upon which he gave a faithful account of his meeting with the poor Mollah from Ardebil.

The Shah reflected for a while, and said,

"Well! burnt father! what is to be done?"

"As I am your sacrifice," exclaimed the Kaka, "although by the blessing of Allah, thumbs are plentiful in Ispahan, still through your royal condescension, wit is not less so; a man cannot bury his right hand in a dish of rice without showing whether he has a thumb or not."

"How is this?" said the King, "among the twenty score of hands which exist at the foot of my throne, where will you find the deficient thumb you seek?"

The Kaka then explained a variety of schemes he had formed for the discovery of the culprit; among others he recommended one as the most eligible—that of inviting all the men of the law in Ispahan to an entertainment, when he might, at leisure, make a scrutiny of each man's right hand, as he handled the food before him.

"As I hope for your majesty's favour," said

he, "it is plain that all Mollahs seek the royal countenance; they all love eating, and let it not be denied, they do not dislike drinking, therefore, every one with the turban and the cross-breasted coat will be sure to attend; thus the culprit may be detected. The good destiny of the Shah will not fail to bring this act of royal condescension to a happy conclusion."

The Shah, though not quite convinced of the efficacy of this scheme, still acceded to it. He felt that by such doings his melancholy was dissipated; he thus found himself freed from the trammels that usually beset royalty, and by becoming more mixed up with his subjects, knowing their wants, and being informed of their modes of life, his heart expanded into yearnings of benevolence to which it had long been a stranger. At the same time, he did not allow himself to relax from those feelings which despotism and unlimited authority engender, and whilst he granted the Kaka more familiarity than he did to others who were permitted to approach his person, still he ever held over him the rod of his authority. He said to him,

"Well! so be it—invite all the Mollahs, beginning from the Sheikh al Islam and the Cazi to the lowest scribe of the law;—it is probable that the rogue from Ardebil will be among them, so we may seize him and administer justice;—but should he not be there and your scheme fail, then put your trust in Allah, for the Shah's beard is not to be laughed at!"

The Kaka immediately made his prostration, and taking his own beard into his hand, said to himself, "Now open well your eyes, O man! let this beard shew its wisdom! the eyes of the world as well as those of the Shah are upon you, and should you not succeed, you will be called dog's father, and cur's whelp—as Allah is Allah—if the Shah laughs not, the Kaka cries, that is certain!"

A great entertainment was forthwith prepared in the Saloon of Forty Pillars, and every priest, scribe, muezzin and mollah, from the Sheikh al Islam to the lowest scribe, were ordered to appear on a given day to partake of the royal hospitality. The fountains in the great court were set to play, the marble basins were filled

to the brim, and carpets were spread for the reception of the guests.

The Shah took post in a small apartment which looked into the saloon, thus seeing all that was going on without being himself visible, whilst Kaka Pembeh was employed in ordering the disposition of the feast, and superintending the accommodation of the company.

The guests came in succession, and were seated according to their respective ranks;—the feast was served by the royal servants, and consisted principally of those plentiful dishes of rice, those highly spiced and perfumed pillaus, for which the reign of Shah Abbas was famous. At the bismillah or grace, which was audibly pronounced by the Cazi in chief, every man's right hand was straightway plunged into the smoking rice—a moment eagerly expected by the Kaka, who beginning at the uppermost seats and proceeding regularly down the line, began a severe scrutiny upon thumbs. He gazed with secret, though intense interest, when to his utmost surprize he perceived, at the first glance, on looking at the

Cazi of Ispahan, one only second in dignity to the Sheikh al Islam, that his right hand was without a thumb.

"How is this," said Cottonwool, "no thumb to the Cazi—this cannot be." Still he looked, and still he was sure that he was not mistaken. He perceived the holy man with his hand up to his very wrist in rice, and remarked at every handful which he drew out, in order to make a ball fitted to the orifice of his mouth, that the thumb so useful in giving that ball an impetus inwards, was wanting. In utter astonishment he proceeded to look down the line, and after having made a close inspection of every man's right hand, he found that the Cazi was the only one present who wanted a thumb. This functionary was a small decrepit man, old and withered, and apparently so weak, that it was quite evident he never could have run away with any man's daughter—still the Kaka thought it right to make inquiries, and it appeared that in fact he had arrived only a few days previously from the very Ardebil in question. Brother Cottonwool was at his wit's end, being thrown into a state of great in-

decision how to proceed. His buffoonery, however, came to his aid, and as it was his object at once to amuse his royal master and to save himself from disgrace, he quickly stole from the assembly, and throwing himself at the feet of the Shah, with mock despair in his countenance, announced that in his chief justice, his majesty possessed an undoubted abductor.

The King was so much amused by this announcement, that he fairly fell back on his seat from excess of laughter, and when he turned his eyes towards the Cazi, who unconscious of having given offence, was filling himself with rice and other good things, observing his little puckered up person, scarcely robust enough to sustain the large turban with which his head was encumbered, his paroxysms returned with redoubled force.

"Ill-favoured wretch!" said he to his buffoon, "what intelligence is this? Am I to believe that that man yonder, no stronger than the reed of the desert has borne away a daughter of the faithful by force?"

"As I am your sacrifice," exclaimed the Kaka, "your slave is also bewildered—but what can I say? he has but just arrived from

Ardebil, and he has only one thumb! It is plain this must be the culprit."

"Go and ascertain," said the Shah, "let the object of this entertainment be proclaimed, and if the most venerable the Cazi be the culprit, let him abide by the punishment due unto his crime."

The Kaka soon returned to the assembly, and as the eating had now subsided, and men's appetites were satisfied, he with a loud voice proclaimed the commands of the King, and explained the object of the meeting. No sooner had the explanation been made, than it was pleasant to remark the universal inspection which each man made of his own proper hands, as if he required some new light to assure him, that they were whole and unmutilated.

The Cazi alone appeared blank and woe-stricken; he glared at his thumbless hand with dire anticipation of what was about to happen; he felt, that however innocent he might be, yet he knew that suspicion, once awakened in the breast of a wilful and despotic monarch, was sure to bring mischief in its train, and already he trembled.

A general shew of hands having been made,

and the Cazi being the only one present who came under the description of the culprit, the Kaka desired him to arise and follow; which the grave judge immediately did amid the suppressed titters of the assembly, accompanied by the stroking down of beards to prevent an utter explosion of laughter.

When the Cazi appeared before the King, he knelt down; then having kissed the ground, arose and stood before him. "How is this," said Shah Abbas, "what words are these which are come to the King's ears? A Mollah with one thumb, has fled from Ardebil with a true believer's daughter. We hear that thou art just arrived from that city, and of all the Mollahs of Ispahan, thou alone hast only one thumb: can this be true?"

"*Astafarallah!* God forbid," exclaimed the Cazi, "what words are these? As this less than the least is the humblest of your slaves, and as he takes the holy prophet to witness, he declares that there is no truth in the accusation—how can it be? look at my poor weak body and tottering limbs, do they speak the bold seducer? besides is it not well known that from a child I have been a cripple; was

it not said, when your slave was appointed to be the Cazi of Ispahan, that I was not eligible for the situation, because it was asked how can even-handed justice be expected from a man who has not his full complement of fingers? Such calumnies as these ought not to be allowed to pass current in your majesty's blessed reign."

The Shah, who could scarcely contain his laughter at the awful plight in which he beheld his judge, would very probably have dismissed him without further words, but the Kaka foreseeing that if such were the termination of this day's ceremonial, it was possible that the Shah's displeasure would fall upon himself, with great humility stepped forward, and remarked, that since his reverence the Cazi had pleaded feebleness as proof of his inability to commit the alleged crime, it became advisable that before the Shah, and in the face of the whole assembly, he should exhibit some proof of that feebleness, and thus convince the world that he was innocent.

"Upon my eyes be it," said the Cazi, overjoyed at having this opportunity afforded him of proving his innocence.

"So be it," said the King.

Upon which the Kaka, having already planned in his mind a trick which he was sure would prove palatable to the humour of his master reconducted the Cazi to his place in the assembly, and then with great gaiety of purpose, announced that it was the command of the Shah, in order to give the Cazi a fair chance of exculpating himself from the odium of an imputed crime, that he should exhibit before the assembly such undoubted proofs of the weakness of his person, that no one should go away without being satisfied of the falseness of the accusation. To that effect, it was ordained that he should take upon his back the very reverend the Sheikh al Islam, and proceed with him once up and once down the great walk in the court; should he succeed in performing this feat, the trial for the imputed crime would proceed. Should he fail, he would be pronounced innocent.

It may well be imagined how great was the sensation produced both upon the Shah himself, and upon the assembled dignitaries when the Kaka had proclaimed this unexpected command.

The Sheikh al Islam was a very stout man, a remarkably fat and heavy man, who wore upon his head one of the largest of turbans, and who was as great a contrast to the spare diminutive Cazi as one man can be to another. He became suddenly inflated with anger at this attack upon his dignity, but fearing to show his feelings, observed as he knew himself to be by the Shah in person, he smothered them in the best manner he was able, and clothed his face with as many smiles as he could command, looking stern and indignant when he eyed the jester, but pleased and approving when his face was in such a position as to be seen by the King. Both the personages came forward, mortified by the merriment of the assembly, which was greatly increased by the countenance and words of the buffoon. The Kaka helped the greater man to mount the lesser, whose knees bending under his burthen, could scarcely sustain the shock of reception. Tottering onward a few steps, amidst the half suppressed acclamations, jeers and laughter of the spectators, for they were aware of the immediate presence of the Shah, the Cazi was

gradually edged on by the Kaka to the margin of the fountain, whose waters ran in a deep marble basin, and there he fairly broke down, whilst his burthen was carefully tilted into the stream.

The heavy man disappeared beneath the foam of an immense splash, and commenced a series of flounderings and evolutions, such as had never before been seen performed by either fish or flesh since Persia was a kingdom.

The effect which this scene had upon the Shah was precisely that which the Kaka had intended to produce—his majesty was convulsed with laughter. When he perceived his chief of the law performing his gambols in the water, he fairly rolled back in ecstasy, extending his hands and crying out *buss, buss*, enough, enough! as a signal to his attendants that the sport should cease. When a little come to himself, he ordered the Kaka to stand before him, and as soon as he appeared, exclaimed:

"Burnt father! would you kill the Shah, what have you done? ill-favoured being! do we appoint dignitaries of the law that you should drown them? go, dismiss the assembly, send the

Cazi to his post—you have made your face white for to-day; but open well your eyes, you have not caught the culprit yet, and justice is still to be executed—go, and do the Shah's bidding."

The assembly soon dispersed, and the jester immediately retreated to give an account of the morning's adventures to the grand vizier; but although pleased at the success which had attended his endeavours to excite the Shah's mirth, still he was perplexed lest he should not after all succeed in discovering the real man with one thumb.

On his road thither, he met one of his acquaintance, a broker with whom he formerly had had dealings, who stopping him seized him by the sleeve and said, "My aga!" (for he was so called since he had acquired influence at court,) "your slave begs leave to lay before you a circumstance which will require your consideration."

"How is this!" said Cottonwool looking correspondingly dignified, "what goods have you on hand?"

"Goods! goods indeed!" exclaimed the

other, "such a commodity has never been seen at the market of Ispahan since the days of Leilah or Shireen; your Lordship must come and inspect it."

"Speak, man!" exclaimed the Kaka, "speak out clear and without writhing;—what would you say?"

"The truth is," said the broker, "a merchant from Georgia has arrived with a maiden for sale—so beautiful, so accomplished, so heart-enslaving, that since the world began, nothing like her was ever seen. She would be fit for the holy prophet himself, but that cannot be, she must belong to the Shah—she can and must be possessed by none else."

The Kaka was immediately convinced that this might prove a fortunate discovery; for if the maiden were really so perfect as the broker represented, then he might hope that this new circumstance might draw off the Shah's mind from the recollection of the injured Mollah of Ardebil, and he himself be extricated from an unpleasant dilemma.

"Where is she to be seen?" said the Kaka.

"Here, hard by," replied the other; "the merchant lives in a miserable den among the ruins; he fears lest his prize should be wrested from him, and his head goes round and round with apprehension. We must approach with caution; he himself is a misfortune, for he does not allow his left eye to know what his right is looking at, so cunning is he."

"Let us go, let us see," said the Kaka with impatience; "if all you tell me be a lie, by the beard of the King, your heart shall jump out of your mouth. I have said it."

Upon this, after making many devious windings through streets of ruins, situated on the borders of the Zainderood, they stopped at a low door, at which the broker rapped.

"In the name of Allah, who is there?" said a voice from within.

"I am here," said the broker.

"*Bismillah*, come in," said the voice; upon which, unbarring the gate, it was speedily opened, and the Kaka and the broker bending their heads under the low arch, entered and stood in the presence of a middle-sized sharp-looking man, with black tufted beard and eye brows,

dressed as a Georgian, having the characteristic dagger hanging on his thigh, and his white sash tied with pendant ends before; but he wore over all a large Persian cloak or *barúni*.

"You are welcome," said the Georgian eyeing Kaka Pembeh from head to foot, "may your shadow never be less," this done, he invited his visitors to be seated, which injunction they obeyed upon very indifferent carpets, spread in a still more indifferent apartment.

After the usual salutations, the broker whispering the Georgian, informed him of the name of his visitor, and the object of his visit, dwelling much upon the influence which he had acquired over the Shah, and the importance of securing his good graces. The merchant upon this became very obsequious and attentive to the Kaka, and flattered him with so much perseverance, that it was evident he had received his education in Persia, although he called himself a Georgian. In the mean while, Cottonwool who never accosted a man without first observing whether he had a thumb on his right hand, became very

observant of the merchant. He did not succeed at first in acquiring any information, for, whether by accident or precaution, it so happened that the Georgian always managed to keep his right hand covered with the sleeve of his cloak. During the whole time they sat and talked, he could not see his hand; when they smoked, the Georgian managed to keep it still covered, and every gesture was invariably executed with his left hand.

At length they conversed upon the subject of the maiden, and owing to the description which the merchant gave of her perfections, the Kaka became extremely anxious to see her, the more so as his suspicions were roused by the now evident desire with which the Georgian concealed his hand. He had not forgotten the story he had heard from the weary traveller of the caravan, and began to hope that he was now about to make an important discovery.

He was conducted into an inner room, where he found a woman veiled from head to foot who, from the attitude she had assumed,

seemed desirous of remaining concealed. The Georgian merchant approached her with respect, and requested her to unveil her face, informing her that the Shah's own agent and confidential servant had come to visit her on the part of his majesty. To this she deigned to give no answer, but only drew her veil the tighter over her face. He then adopted other language, and proceeded to command and insist; a conduct which seemed to excite her utmost indignation, and she at length exclaimed,

"I am no man's slave, neither yours nor the Shah's. I have been stolen from my home under false pretences, and if the King be just, he will protect me."

Upon this the Kaka, approaching the Georgian, suddenly seized the pendant sleeve of his cloak, and said,

"Withdraw the veil from her face, thus," he at the same time pulling the sleeve from off his wrist, discovered that in fact he had no thumb on his right hand. The Georgian was at first astounded, but as the Kaka made the discovery in a manner calculated to

excite no lasting suspicion, he continued to insist upon the removal of the veil, and was about to use force, when the Kaka exclaimed,

"Enough! enough! we will report what we have seen to the Shah, and then await to ascertain what his authority, when exercised, may produce!" Upon this, accompanied by the broker, he quitted the house, mounted his mule, and straightway took his departure.

Perfectly overjoyed at the discovery he had made, his first care was to proceed to the royal palace and procure a band of the King's nasakchies or executioners, who accompanied him forthwith to the caravanserai of the Tabriz merchants; there he found the Ardebil Mollah, who had almost given up in despair, the hope of evermore finding his daughter. Ordering a mule to be provided for him, the jester made the poor man mount, and without saying a word of his discovery, or of the object he had in view, proceeded to the house of the Georgian merchant. He there dismounted, and stationing the executioners around the house, ordered their officer to

knock at the door, which was done with a tone of so much authority, as to make the merchant within tremble with apprehension.

"What has happened?" said he, keeping the door closed.

"On the part of the Shah open," said the officer.

As soon as the door was opened, the Kaka ordered the Ardebil priest to advance, and placing him face to face with the merchant, said,

"In the name of Allah, is that the seducer of your daughter?"

The recognition which took place between the parties immediately explained all.

"By the beard of Ali," said the Mollah, "that is the rogue who stole away my daughter."

"How is this?" exclaimed the Georgian, attempting to maintain his imposture, "who are you that come here and attack a poor man in his own house?"

"Seize him," said the Kaka to the executioners, "bind him, and strike him on the mouth, should he speak again." Then heedless of further

interruption, followed by the Ardebil Mollah, he entered the room where the maiden was confined;—she at first retreated to the farthest corner of the apartment, but when she perceived the Mollah, she ran, and seizing the skirt of his coat, kissed it, and exclaimed,

"Oh my father, my father! thanks be to Allah, my destiny has changed."

After the first greetings between father and child had subsided, the Kaka ordered the whole party to be instantly conducted to the palace, with injunctions that the Georgian merchant should be strictly watched, lest he should attempt to escape.

As soon as they had reached the palace, Cottonwool who had always a ready admittance to the presence of the Shah, went in to him and prostrating himself, exclaimed, as he clothed his face with a look of uncommon archness,

"Kebleh of the world! as I am your sacrifice, your slave has found him—a burnt father with one thumb is in readiness without."

"What news is this," said the Shah, "do

you laugh at our beard, or has truth for once visited your lips."

"By the King's jikeh!* by the salt which I eat, by the soul of the Prophet, your less than the least speaks truth." Upon which he related the whole circumstance of the fortunate discovery he had made, and expatiated largely upon the charms and virtues of the maiden.

"Bring them before us," said his majesty, and drawing himself up on his seat, awaited the appearance of the culprit and his accuser.

When the Georgian entered, he eyed every thing around with a stealthy look, but at the same time clothed his face with a look of the most abject humility. The Mollah walked in with confidence and respect, whilst his daughter remained in the back ground, entirely veiled.

"Whence come you, O little man!" exclaimed the Shah to the Georgian; "what is your native place?"

"Your slave is from Georgia," answered the other, "he does not lie."

* The jewelled ornament on the royal head dress.

"Bring hither the *felek*,"* exclaimed the Shah, who had a quick perception of any provincial or national peculiarity, "we shall soon see whether you be a Georgian or no."

The self-called Georgian taking fright, fell abjectly upon his knees and exclaimed,

"Pardon, pardon, your slave is from Shiraz —he has eaten dirt, and claims forgiveness."

"Well!" said the Shah, "and so you are a child of Shiraz, O dog without a saint. Is it thus you lie in the presence of the Shah? Tell me, wherefore did you run away with this man's daughter?"

Upon this the accused entered into a long explanation, evidently invented for the occasion, until the Shah, whose object was to be amused, as well as to administer justice, stopped him, and said:

"Now, man, open well your eyes—this is no child's play—you are evidently a rogue without compare; but, speak the truth for once—we will

* The felek is a pole with a noose in the middle, through which the culprit's feet are passed when bastinadoed.

listen to your whole history—if you lie, do you see that (pointing to the felek) we beat till day and night will be all one to you—speak the truth, and you will enjoy the Shah's condescension. I wish particularly to be informed wherefore you have only one thumb."

"By my eyes," said the rogue, "whatever the King commands, so will I obey." Thus saying, he began his story in the following words.

STORY RELATED BY ALI MURAD, THE MAN-STEALER.

"May it please the Kebleh of the world! I was born in Shiraz—my father was purveyor to the governor of that city, when your majesty first ascended the throne—my mother was a Georgian slave. Although my father had one wife, yet I was allowed to be brought up in the house, and was educated as his heir, for he had no other children. I went to school at the mosque in our neigbourhood, and was well advancing in my learning, when

my father, who had acquired considerable wealth by his purveyorship, in an ill-fated hour for my happiness, married a second wife—the widow of a Khan of some celebrity. Being young and handsome, she gave herself great airs, and finding that I was only the son of a slave, she expressed herself shocked at my presence, and in a storm of virtuous indignation, insisted upon my immediate removal. My father, who was rather a weak man, fearing lest some misfortune should happen to his new wife, who to his joy soon promised him a second child, acceded to her request, and I was expelled the house, without any further provision than fifty tomauns in my purse, good clothes to my back, a mule to ride upon, and a letter of recommendation to my father's brother, who was established at Bagdad as a druggist. I was then not more than seventeen years old, and being heedless of the future, was not sorry to travel and see the world. I will not say that I was a model of good conduct, for in truth, Kebleh of the world! I had fallen into bad company even at that early age. My companions, who were a set of ill-

conducted youths, taught me to laugh at sacred things. We played tricks upon priests, ran away with their slippers and lanterns, and gave great offence by worrying dumb animals. In short, under their tuition I became a complete scape-grace, and was looked up to as the principal authority in all matters of licentiousness. When I left Shiraz, my father, a quiet easy man, was glad to get rid of me, and, therefore, did not confer the distinction of accompanying me out of the town; that ceremony was performed by my associates, who took their leave after we had finished a whole skin of wine, much to the annoyance of some of the soberer part of the caravan. Having reached Bagdad, I immediately conveyed myself and baggage to the house of my uncle, who received me with kindness, and gave me a corner in his house to sleep in; but I brought nothing to him, excepting my own precious person, for what money I possessed, was dissipated by the road-side, long before I reached my destination. He would have been willing to bring me up to his

business, and offered me a share in his shop, but although I should have rejoiced in the profits, yet I could not prevail upon myself to undertake the drudgery also. I had no turn for weighing out pepper, cinnamon and drugs, and cared neither for red or blue dyes. However, I lived at my uncle's expence, and passed my time in coffee-houses and in pleasure parties on the river, which so little suited his pocket or his habits of business, that one day he told me fairly, either that I must make myself useful to him, or leave his house. I preferred the latter alternative, and accordingly with a more plentiful supply of money than I was entitled to, (for my uncle was a liberal man) I left Bagdad with a caravan for Mosoul, intending to make my way to Constantinople, which I knew to be the head-quarters for men of idleness, pleasure and ingenuity like myself. I found no one among the travellers of the caravan who suited my humour, for they were all merchants whose minds were absorbed in their calculations, and hopes of gain, but at Mosoul, we were joined by a wild character, in dress and habits

a wandering dervish, as rare a hypocrite as ever washed himself five times a day and counted his beads for the inspection of the public.

"My youth and good-for-nothing appearance doubtless attracted his attention, and before many days had elapsed, he made me his confidant and invited me to become his companion. He assured me that he lived a merry life, full of variety and adventure, and that his principal resource lay in the credulity and weakness of mankind. He worked principally upon their fears and religious apprehensions, and asserted that there was scarcely a town or village which, if well begged, did not yield a handsome livelihood at least for one week, and that too without risk of blows or fractured limbs. When we reached Diarbekr, we took leave of the caravan, and quitting the high road, visited small towns and little frequented habitations. My companion having observed a village that owned two minarets and a bath, he there determined to make an essay upon the credulity of the natives. He approached it after the usual manner of dervishes by winding his horn, an accomplishment which, as we sat by the way-

side, he imparted to me, and then raised the cry of Hoo! and Allah ho Akbar! and Allah, Allah! Spreading his skin upon the ground near the mosque, we there established ourselves. The inhabitants, particularly the women, came to see us, and brought us presents of bread, milk and honey—these were, however, but little suited to the taste of the dervish, who required more substantial food. He exclaimed with a proud toss of the head, shaking his hand horizontally at the same time, 'I will sell their fathers and mothers, before two days are over, should they not supply us better than this.' He then gradually began to make his wants known. He first asked for eggs, sour milk, and coffee, after which his demands increased to rice, fowls and lamb. A few eggs were brought, of which we made a good meal, and we also received coffee—but no rice, fowls, or lamb. My companion in consequence turned his eyes towards the small terrace on the mosque, and having selected a firm portion of the parapet for the performance of his intended trick, he said to me:

"'Now you shall see,' upon that he began to

cry out in his very loudest voice, 'Allah, Allah! come, come, come to my assistance, I am poor, I am miserable—I am a dervish—I want rice—I want fowls—I want mutton.' Many persons were collected, but they did not seem much inclined to listen to his call, when projecting his body over the parapet, he made an apparent effort to throw himself over, bawling all the while, 'I want rice—I want meat—I want sour milk!' This frightened the credulous peasants, who between their fear of having the blood of a dead man to answer for, and that of not fulfilling the well known duties of hospitality to a stranger, came running towards us with the provisions we required, and thus before many minutes had elapsed we were provided with luxuries, even more than we could well consume.

"We lived happily for some time at this village, and having exhausted the good will of the inhabitants, proceeded to an adjacent town, which we had previously visited, and which could boast of five respectable minarets, a handsome aga's house, two baths and a bazaar well supplied with merchandize. Here we expected to reap a

considerable harvest, for the place had not been lately visited by dervishes, and every thing promised well. However, my companion was mistaken;—in vain did he make his wants known; in vain did he cry, howl, and invoke, few were the presents we received. At length, swearing in great wrath at the town, its inhabitants, their fathers, grandfathers, and all their relations, he took a great oath, that he would defile their fowls, lambs, rice, sugar and coffee if he were not supplied before the day was over. Accordingly he informed me that he would pretend to throw himself from off the roof of the principal mosque, and to that effect requested me to stand behind, hold him fast by the leg when he should be leaning forward to his utmost, and thus prevent him from a real act of self-destruction; adding, 'You will see what will follow.'

"I had imbibed no great affection for my companion—he was in fact, a churlish, vulgar fellow, who only made use of me for his own advantage, and who having discovered how unsuccessful his own endeavours were without an accomplice, had secured me for that purpose,

and this was an occasion when my services were peculiarly wanted. Having by many preliminary exclamations and threats surrounded himself by a large crowd, he ascended, and then accosted them thus,

" ' Miserable man that I am! poor, wretched, and a wandering dervish! hospitality is enjoined to all good mussulmans—no hospitality to me—oh ye men! oh ye mussulmans! I want rice, I want fowls, I want mutton—if you delay I'll throw myself off! I will die! my blood be upon yourselves, your wives and children, your fathers, mothers and descendants —bring me rice—bring me mutton.'

" Upon which, throwing himself forward, he seemed to hang to the parapet by one foot only, which as I stood behind I held with my utmost grasp. The crowd, however, remained unmoved.

" At this moment, a thought rushed through my brain like lightning, I was excited to the utmost, I longed to make an impression on the mob, I suddenly let go the dervish's foot, and giving him a slight push, over he went, still howling out rice, fowls and mutton, and down he fell on

the stones beneath. He lit upon his head, broke his neck, and became a breathless corpse.

"Kebleh of the world! you ought to have seen the sensation this event produced; in an instant hundreds ran together, and before a quarter of an hour had elapsed, the whole place was strewn with rice, fowls and provisions. I acted my part to perfection. I cried—I invoked—I tore my clothes and plucked my hair. Then taking possession of the dead body of the dervish, I treated it with all the consideration due to a saint and a martyr.

"The sympathies of the whole town were turned in my favour, and before the day closed I found that it only depended upon myself to live for the rest of my days upon the celebrity of this act, and be supported by the bounty of its inhabitants. I did not lose the advantages I had acquired. It was not necessary for me to cry out 'fowls, rice and mutton,' these things came to me in greater abundance than I could require—all I had to do was to remain a faithful hypocrite, and to act the part of one who had abandoned the world. I adopted the

character of the defunct, I wore his clothes, covered my head with his cap, and, impressed my features with his sanctimonious look. But, although at first overjoyed at my success yet I soon grew weary of this mode of life. I had become heartily tired of the inhabitants and the inhabitants of me, therefore, one fine morning before the cock crew, I shouldered my staff and blowing my horn, took my departure without saying a word to any one; a disregard to form being one of the expected qualities of a good wandering dervish.

" On leaving this place, I adopted a new line of road, and having howled and begged my way through several towns and villages, at length found myself at Arzroum, a large city, the seat of a Pasha, and the great frontier town between Turkey and my native country. Here I found merchants both travelling and resident from all parts of Anadoli, and caravans passing to and fro almost daily from Constantinople and Smyrna to Persia, Georgia and even to Astrakan. Being tired of my vagabond life, I now determined to abandon the character of a dervish

and to appear as an honest man. Accordingly I exchanged my dress in the bazaar for that of a common person, and thus accoutred, I frequented the caravanserais, and endeavoured to make acquaintance with the merchants, hoping to strike into adventures more likely to lead to substantial fortune than the wild existence I had just abandoned.

"The merchants were cautious men, and did not like to associate with one whom nobody knew. The only account I could, with prudence, give of myself was to announce myself as nephew to a great druggist at Bagdad, but no one seemed to give heed to my tale. There was one merchant, however, whose trade and pursuits I could not at first ascertain, who frequently came to the coffee-house which I most frequented, and always inquired, 'what news from Georgia?' with him I at length became well acquainted.

"It was some time before I could discover the drift of his hints and observations, for he made many, but having heard that he was a great dealer and speculator in slaves, I began to divine his intentions; his object in truth was to secure

my services, as one of a gang who plied on the frontiers for slaves; in short to make me a kidnapper.

"He offered me a share in the profits of his trade, which were considerable, and which, indeed, needed to be such, since I found that the enterprises in which I should necessarily be involved were frequently accompanied by much danger. I hesitated for some time, for I did not like danger in any shape, but at length impelled by fate and necessity, I agreed to his terms.

"The head-quarters of his operations was Akalziké, a small town situated on the Turkish frontiers of Georgia and Circassia, and thither it was proposed that I should join others in his pay acting under a sub-agent, who forwarded the slaves to him as fast as they were secured, to be assorted, some for the markets of the interior of Asia, others for Trebizond, thence to be forwarded by sea to Constantinople.

"Having been provided with the proper clothing and arms, I left the merchant and proceeded with a small caravan to the place of my destination, which I reached without difficulty, although

I traversed on the way some of the wildest mountainous tracts that the imagination can conceive, and occasionally saw inhabitants whose fierce looks made me tremble with apprehension at the prospect of being invited to carry such personages away by force. I made myself known to the sub-agent, who soon introduced me to my future associates, all crimps by profession. They were a gang of ruffians, each one looking more a desperado than the other, whose only talk was of seizing, binding, striking and slaying. Every one had some act of violence to boast of, the mildest of which amounted to abduction. One boasted that he had bought a daughter and two sons from their father, who having tried to steal them back again, he had been obliged to slay. Another, having bought a wife from her husband asserted, that he had defeated the affectionate consort's scheme of separation by stealing him also, and thus rejoined the couple. Others vaunted their dexterity in entering houses, digging holes beneath the wall and carrying away every living soul they found within.

" I inquired, with much anxiety, if violence

were always necessary, seeing that fighting had never been my profession; when to my great joy, I found such was by no means the case, for the inhabitants of Georgia, Circassia, and Mingrelia, particularly the latter, were so base and so utterly lost to all natural feeling, that they only reared families of children in the hope and with the intention of selling them to the Turks.

" My associates were each equipped with a long rope, twisted round their person by way of girdle, for the purpose of securing such slaves as they might either steal or buy; and having acquired this badge of my trade, I was not long in being appointed to perform a piece of service on the Mingrelian frontier.

" The sub-agent it seems had been in negociation with a Mingrelian chief, who by a certain day was to deliver over a number of slaves for a stipulated sum, and I with others was appointed to proceed to a station among the mountains, and there remain concealed until we should hear from the Mingrelian that his victims were ready for seizure.

" We were enjoined to be well on our guard; because this man was a notoriously licentious

character, the object of his present scheme being to raise a sum of money in order that he might have the means of entertaining a new mistress, whom in spite of every opposition, he was determined to instal in his house.

"The time being come, we took post in the thickest part of the forest, near the Mingrelian frontier. We were all well armed, well furnished with ropes, and kept our courage up by drinking ardent spirits. At length, on the second day after our arrival, as the shades of night approached, we heard a long shrill whistle at a distance, which my companions recognized as the signal agreed upon, and immediately proceeded in the direction whence it came. We were soon met by the chief in person, who assured us that the slaves were at hand, and presently after we perceived them coming down an adjacent slope in a confused and disorderly manner. They were twelve in number, and appeared to be in the last stage of drunkenness. To our astonishment, we discovered that they were priests, men of all ages, and all sizes, and these were transferred to us as our property.

"Upon inspection they were found in no wise to answer our purpose. Some were old and grey-bearded, others short and crooked, and totally useless for the purposes of merchandize. Upon this, we flatly refused to receive them, or to pay the money — a denial which we expected would immediately lead to acts of violence; but the Mingrelian was too intent upon his object to be easily disconcerted, and he desired us to wait for a short time when he would return with that which would satisfy us.

"We waited accordingly whilst our wretched victims lay groaning under the trees, and in the course of a short time, had the pleasure to see him return accompanied by a woman. "Here," he said, "this will complete our bargain, you can have no hesitation now to give me the money." We inspected the woman and found her to be really handsome, notwithstanding the state of excitement, anger and misery in which she was plunged, vociferating execrations with all the fury of a mad woman at her abductor, and imploring our compassion, entreating us not to tear her away from her children,

family and country. However, pity did not belong to our profession, and, therefore, without heeding her, we added her to the other twelve, and the money was forthwith paid.

"The truth of the story was as follows: —The Mingrelian having found great difficulty in completing the requisite number of slaves, had resorted to the expedient of inviting twelve priests to his house under the pretext of making them officiate on a saint's day, which having done, he gave them an entertainment, where he made them drunk, and disposed of them as already related. By means of his servants, he conveyed them to us, but when he found us determined not to receive them, immediately returned to his house, and through some false pretext, enticing his wife to follow him, forthwith delivered her to us, as a make-weight to his deficiency.

"In cool blood we might have been struck by the extreme abomination of his conduct, but the hearts of my companions were perfectly hardened; and mine, through weakness of character, and force of example,

was hardened also. I would fain have helped her, but what could I do?

"It was on this occasion," continued Ali Murad, "that I had the misfortune to lose my thumb. I was appointed to take charge of one of the prisoners, a stout priest, who at first behaved himself with exemplary resignation, when, to my horror, as I clutched his long beard, the better to bind his person, he seized upon my thumb with his teeth, and biting it with the ferocity of a dog, retained his hold until he had nearly bitten through the bone. No blows could destroy the tenacity of his jaws, and he kept grinding with unruffled composure, until, at length, the sharp blade of a dagger, thrust into his mouth, forced him to loose his hold.

"He, however, had succeeded in depriving me of the use of my thumb for ever, for one of our party was obliged to cut it off for me, and stopt the flow of blood by plunging the stump into boiling oil. After undergoing a long probation of pain, at length it healed, and I was once again restored to the duties of my profession.

I proceeded in it step by step until I became as hard-hearted as the rest, and having realized some money, stole on my own account, occasionally securing a child for private speculation, until I could manage to make ventures in maids and wives.

"After a time, I quitted the stealing department and became a dealer. The fraud which I lately practised in enticing this old man's daughter from his roof in Ardebil, is now before you, and I throw myself upon your majesty's mercy. I have concealed nothing—I acknowledge my fault—place me in any situation in which I can show zeal for your majesty's service, and you will find in Ali Murad one who will prove what intelligence, activity and fidelity can accomplish;—but, should your majesty deem me worthy of punishment, here is my neck and here are my feet—your humble slave submits, without a murmur, to whatever may be awarded to him."

The Shah had listened with much attention to Ali Murad's narrative, and although he was incensed at the cruelties he had committed as a man-stealer, yet he was diverted by

his adventures as a dervish, and softened by the fearless manner with which he had spoken the truth.

Having sat and cogitated for some time, the assembled group standing before him in silent expectation of the judgment he was about to pass, his majesty at length opened his lips and said, addressing himself to the old Mollah of Ardebil:

"Come forward, old man, your fortune is on the rise; you have recovered possession of your daughter, and you have seen the King; thank Allah for this. You shall also enjoy full benefit of the law of our sacred prophet, (upon whom be blessings!) and shall overcome your enemy. Here, Cottonwool!" addressing himself to the jester, "go, take the ear of that burnt father (pointing to Ali Murad) in your hands, place it in the hand of that injured true believer. Now, old man, do with the offender what seemeth best to you; the Shah has said it."

The Shah's decree was immediately carried into execution. The man-stealer was marched away slave of the man he had injured, and the city was made to

ring of the equity of the Shah's judgment.

We will not stop to inquire what became of Ali Murad, but this we must say, that the Mollah's beautiful daughter became one of the principal favourites of the royal harem, and reigned supreme in the affections of the enamoured Shah. Her influence was so great, that she was said to carry about the Shah's beard in her hand, and it very soon evinced itself by an event which became the talk and astonishment of the whole city.

The old and infirm Cazi, in consequence of the fright and excitement produced by the treatment which he had received on the day of the great feast, fell sick, and not long after the scene just described, died.

To the astonishment of every one, and to the disgust of the whole body of the Ulemah, the Mollah of Ardebil was appointed to be Cazi in his stead.

"Who is this?" said one man of the law, staggering under the weight of his turban, "who comes here and takes his place over all our heads? over mine which carries about more

law in the tip of one of the hairs of its beard, than he, his grand-father, his great grand-father, or all his ancestry ever did in their whole persons!"

"May his house be ruined," exclaimed a second. "Cazi, indeed, there is that for such a Cazi," throwing his five fingers into the air. "There is not a cur in the bazaar, that will not come and laugh at his beard as he sits in his place at the four waters*."

"Where have we got to now?" asked a third, "that a cow from Ardebil, who has done nothing all his life but sit upon his carpet, and wag his head to and fro near the sheik's tomb, should come and administer justice at the King's gate, to the people of the imperial city."

To all these questions and remarks, there was only one answer to make, which was, he is the father of the beautiful Dilferib. The poor old Mollah who was, indeed, little fitted, either

* *Chahar sú* or Four Waters is a conspicuous spot in an Eastern bazaar, where four canals of running water usually concentrate, where the Cazi sits to administer justice.

by character or attainments, to fill the important situation of Cazi in so large and populous a city as Ispahan, although highly flattered at the distinction conferred upon him, became very much perplexed whenever a question of any difficulty was brought before him to decide. At his first appointment, he did nothing but exclaim, "Allah! there is but one Allah!" at the greatness of his good fortune, and, seeing that all things prospered, he concluded that the same good luck would favour him in his future career.

He had tried many causes, and by the help of destiny, had managed to pronounce tolerably good judgments, but one day there came before him a case, which so completely puzzled him, that he was fain to cry "Aman! Aman! Pity! oh pity." It was as follows.

THE STORY OF BABADUL, AND A VENDER OF SWEETMEATS.

A muleteer of the name of Babadul, was wont to make journies into the most distant

parts of Persia, and even into Turkey and Arabia, according as he found the best price for the hire of his cattle.

His principal possession was a fine string of mules, the pride of the caravans, to which he added a very handsome, though silly, wife, who remained at home during his absence. He was a good man, worked hard, and had acquired so much celebrity for honest dealing, that his beasts never remained idle to eat unprofitable corn and straw, and the consequence was, that he had amassed a large sum of money.

Although honest, yet he was occasionally warm in his temper and addicted to anger, by which means he made enemies of those who would not overlook affronts in favour of his real worth.

There lived in his neighbourhood, a *halwaji*, a vender of coarse sweetmeats, which he hawked about the town for sale. His name was Sari Mehmet, or Yellow Mahommed, so called because his beard was said to be of the same colour as his ware, and this man often excited Babadul's wrath, because he

possessed the art of teazing in an eminent degree, and would, at the most inconvenient moments, when the mule driver was preparing his mules for a journey, assorting the packages to the strength of each animal, and mending his tackle, hover about him and cry out, "*halwa! halwa!*" with the most pertinacious obstinacy, although he saw no one who wanted sweetmeats, and was aware that his absence would be much more agreeable than his presence.

It was early in the morning when Babadul was busy preparing his mules for a long journey into Khorassan, that Sari Mehmet appeared crying out *halwa* as usual, with the utmost vehemence, and took his post at the corner of the open space where the mules and packages were collected, breaking the stillness of the morning by his eternal cry. The muleteer, vexed at finding that one of his best mules had fallen lame, and perplexed what to do, (for the caravan was then collecting at the city gate,) was so much annoyed by the ill-timed intrusion of the halwaji, that losing all patience, he exclaimed, "In the name of Allah, why do you stand there

braying like an ass; don't you see that we are all mules and mule drivers here, and that we want none of your sweetmeats. You have dried up my liver, with your noise!"

"*Beheh!*" exclaimed Sari Mehmet, "what words are these? if you do not eat halwa, others do; why am I a *halwaji?*"

Upon which he cried sweetmeats with redoubled vigour. Babadul's rage rose in proportion as the other's power of annoyance increased, until at length, unable to contain himself longer, he took up a staff that was at hand and threw it so exactly to the mark, that it struck the offender on the head and overthrew the large wooden platter, containing his sweetmeats, on the ground.

"Curses on your throat!" exclaimed Babadul.

"Well done!" exclaimed his man.

"I'll burn your father for this!" roared the sweetmeat-man. "I'll destroy your house, oh you man without a saint."

"Go to Jehanum," exclaimed Babadul; and thus the war raged in words, until the one departed with his mules, and the other had gathered together his scattered sweetmeats.

It was not until two years after this event, that Babadul returned home: upon his departure, he had confided as usual his money, the whole amount of his savings and industry to his wife, which she put away, sealed up in a leathern bag, into a place of safety; but she was too foolish to keep her own counsel, and it was well known in the world that Babadul was rich.

On reaching his house he found his wife, but not his money, and it was in order to recover it, that he now applied to the proper authorities. He had learnt the manner in which the loss had occurred, and when he appeared before the Cazi, stated his case in the following words:

"Your slave begs leave to state, that when last he set off for Khorassan, he left five hundred tomans in gold, and one hundred and fifty silver abassis in a bag, to the care of his wife;—perhaps your slave did right, perhaps he did wrong;—she is a weak one; and her sense is small, but what can be done in opposition to fate? Some twelve months after your slave had left his home, the poor weak one heard a strange cry in the streets; it was the voice of Sari Mehmet, the sweetmeat seller—but instead of

crying out *halwa!* like a good Mussulman, what did he cry, but "Babadul is dead!" to this the weak one will swear. During many days when he passed the house, he cried, *Babadul murdeh! Babadul murdeh!* instead of *halwa, khoob halwa,* as he was wont to do. What can your slave say more?—This burnt father was evidently in league with another burnt father, and before a second month was over, they persuaded the weak one that your slave was dead, and she agreed to marry the rascal in league with the sweetmeat seller. He very soon found out where my money was secreted, and, having got possession of it, did not insist upon marriage, but took his departure, and left us both without a cap to our heads. This is my story; your slave requires justice at the hands of Sari Mehmet who is the origin of all this mischief. What more can I say?"

The Cazi as usual ordered Sari Mehmet to appear, and inquired what he had to say in his defence. The sweetmeat seller, who was a voluble speaker, appeared supported by several witnesses, and very soon puzzled the Cazi by a multiplicity of words. He stoutly denied

having uttered any false cry, announcing the death of his opponent, and hinted that it was evident the woman was wishing the occurrence of such an event, when she could mistake his well known cry of *halwa khoob halwa,* for *Babadul murdeh.* Besides, he argued, what had his cry to do with the loss of the muleteer's money? if she were foolish enough to tell another where the money was concealed what had he to do with it? He swore, and protested his innocence, called so many witnesses to prove that he had never uttered any other cry, than his usual one, and so confused the brains of the Cazi, that in despair, the latter deferred giving judgment, until he should have conferred with his friend the Brother Cottonwool to whom he always had recourse in cases of emergency. The Kaka, when he heard his statement, immediately settled it in his own mind, that the story would afford amusement to his royal master and straightway he made it known to him.

Now the monarch being, according to the Mahommedan law the last tribunal of appeal, Shah Abbas determined to hear the cause himself, and forthwith ordered the parties to appear.

They were introduced by the Kaka and the Cazi, and stood without, near the brink of the marble basin, in fear and trembling.

" Where is your wife?" said the Shah to Babadul, " she is the principal witness;—have you examined her?" said he to the Cazi.

The Cazi said he had not, because her husband had acted for her. As soon as she appeared, the Shah said, " Now, good woman, what witness have you that Sari Mehmet, instead of his usual cry, said " *Babadul murdeh,*" did anybody hear him besides yourself?"

" If the cat could speak," said the woman, " she would bear witness; but no other living thing that I know of."

" Think again," said the Shah, " much depends upon your words."

" Oh!" said the woman, as if awaking from a dream, " O yes, yes, there is our neighbour, who lives opposite to us, and his wife keeps a parrot, and the parrot is daily saying Babadul murdeh!"

" Ah is it so," said the Shah, " bring hither the parrot."

As soon as the parrot appeared, the Shah ordered Sari Mehmet to make his usual cry, when, to the astonishment of every one present, the bird exclaimed, " *Babadul murdeh !*"

" You cannot have a better witness than that," exclaimed the Shah ; " he will speak the truth, when every one else will lie ; we cannot be deceived here." Then addressing the culprit, he said, " If man were to check the first impulse of evil in his thoughts there would be no crime ; the origin of Babadul's loss was your acting upon a malicious intent ; had you restrained yourself, no mischief would have accrued ; as it is, your punishment is inevitable."

Upon that he was ordered a proportionate bastinado on the soles of his feet, and was delivered over to his opponent, who exhibited such generosity of conduct, that the Shah, in admiration of his liberality, and in consideration of his general good conduct appointed him his muleteer-in-chief, with well understood opportunities to enrich himself by certain perquisites of office.

As soon as my friend had ceased to speak, I did not fail to make my acknowledgments with as many *mashallahs* and *barikallahs* as he could desire.

" Did I say well or ill?" he inquired with great earnestness.

Again I exclaimed "mashallah," and he seemed satisfied. " But," said I, " can you venture to talk of Kings to your Shah, in the manner you have done to me? the opinion I have formed of your Shah is this, that unless his subjects continually tickle his ear, he has an ugly propensity to tickle their feet; how is this?"

" As Allah is true," answered the poet, " you do not say ill—but give ear—Kings like to hear of other Kings, it is a theme of which they are never tired, provided, directly or indirectly, you make them feel that the comparison is all in their own favour; do not believe that when I related this story to His Majesty, I used the same terms to him that I have to you. Astafarallah! heaven forbid! I am not so entirely an ass as that. I did not fail to make him understand it was taken for granted, that Shah Abbas was less than a dog when compared

to himself; that the race of Sefi were so many unclean beasts compared to the Kajars; that the ark* of Tehran was a paradise, whilst the Palace of forty pillars at Ispahan was a stable; and, in short, that Persia, at the present day—although," added he, "I need not say how falsely I spoke—is a nation more flourishing than any nation in Asia, when brought into competition with Persia in the time of the Sefies."

"But," said I, "I expected that you would have adopted romance in your narrative instead of history and matter of fact; much may be inculcated through the insinuations of fiction, which cannot be openly spoken. In your present style of story, you must keep to probabilities, and be consistent with something like truth, whereas when you bring fable and fabulous personages to your aid, you can allow imagination to run wild, and may make a story extend from Ispahan to the furthermost Hind."

"You have not decided ill," remarked the Mirza, "and so I do on ordinary occasions, when the road is long, and my wits are not very bright; but in this story, I had an object

* The Shah's palace is called *Ark*.

in view. We have remarked at court, and it is quite agreed among the viziers and courtiers of the King's gate, that the Shah has taken too serious a turn—the Mollahs have too much influence;—long faces, large turbans, and cross breasted coats have given a tinge of false sanctity to the Shah and the princes which is beginning to oppress the nation. The natural Persian is a lively animal, and we begin to feel that the national character is altering for the worse, therefore I devised this story—I wished to insinuate how much good a little mirth would do, and, perhaps, bring buffoons and merry andrews into fashion."

"And how did His Majesty approve of your story?" said I.

"By your soul," said the Mirza, "he fainted with delight; he sent me a partridge next day, which he had killed with his own fortunate hand."

"What did he say to the man-stealer—do such things exist now?"

"In the days of Shah Abbas," said my friend, "such was the case; since these bankrupt Russians have taken possession of the countries of the Caucasus, slaves are not so

plentiful; it is only in time of war that the markets are well furnished—Persia is out of patience for want of slaves."

Thus did we converse, until I rose to take my leave, exacting at the same time from him a promise, that this visit should be succeeded by others when he would narrate to me such stories as he either might have communicated to the King, or have prepared for the purpose of communicating. To this he freely consented, for I had touched his vanity, and I already could perceive, curling up at the corner of his mouth, and in the expansion of his twinkling eyes, symptoms of that prolific invention, parent of the following family of stories.

In order to adapt the foregoing tale to the taste of European readers, I have weeded it of the very lengthy details, and never ending digressions in which my friend indulged. I have also suppressed the whole of the poetry, and opposed myself to that abundance of epithets, which are ever to be found in Oriental writing. I think I have entered sufficiently into the spirit of his narrative to give a tolerable idea of his manner. Had the

Arabian Nights' Entertainments, with all their singular fertility of invention and never ending variety, appeared as a new book in the present day, translated literally, and not adapted to European taste in the manner attempted in M. Galland's translation, I doubt whether they would have been tolerated, certainly not read with the avidity they are, even in the dress with which he has clothed them, however imperfect that dress may be. Still, so capricious is public taste, that the stories here presented to the public may, perhaps, be considered as too much divested of ornament, and not sufficiently abundant in repetition and orientality. Would that it were possible to infuse into our language the happy peculiarities of oriental expressions; then indeed a greater deviation from received idioms might have been indulged in, but, as it is, I have endeavoured to confine myself to a task which may seem easy, but is often most difficult, namely the making oneself intelligible, and if in so doing, I have superadded amusement, I shall esteem myself to have achieved a work of no little importance.

VISIT II.

In the middle of the summer when business induced our embassy to visit the Shah in his palace, on the plains of Ojan, I again had the pleasure of seeing my friend the Mirza. I immediately called upon him in his tent, and he received me with open arms.

"You are welcome," he exclaimed as soon as he saw me, "your place has long been empty. I have things to say to you."

He then entered upon a narrative of his own doings since last we had met; he informed me that on the second night after the King's departure from Tehran, the weather being very sultry, he was suddenly called upon to the King's stirrup; he added that he was extremely sleepy at the time, and that his eyes were scarcely opened ere the Shah ordered him to relate a story. The suddenness of the call was such, that it entirely put out of his head a story which he had invented

in the morning, and, "By your soul," said he, "I was so surprised that my heart came into my mouth with fear; but putting as good a face upon it as I was able, I said to the Shah, "I am your sacrifice, and upon my eyes be it!" Upon which I began, in the usual way, to describe a King who only wanted a son to make him happy and—would you believe it?—my luck was so great, that I related one of the best stories ever invented, and for which the Shah said, 'Barikallah!' and when he had reached his tent, ordered that a dish of rice which had been served up to his own table should be sent to me. I will relate it," he said; upon which, calling for our kalians and placing ourselves in proper attitudes, he began as follows.

STORY OF HEZZAR MUSHKIL, PRINCE OF BUKHARA.

In ancient times, there was a kingdom of great power and extent in Bukhara, bordering

both upon China and Persia, which was governed by a monarch, who possessed every thing that could make him happy. The country he reigned over was situated in an agreeable climate, neither oppressed by overpowering heats in summer, nor chilled by relentless cold in winter.

It abounded in the choicest fruits, its soil yielded abundantly to the cultivator, and famine had never reared its squalid front among its inhabitants. The people were contented to live under the monarch's lenient rule, and he was at peace with his neighbours. He enjoyed the advantage of possessing a wise vizier, whose experience was fostered by sage councillors, and he was not deficient in well-tried generals, and in bodies of valiant soldiers. There was only one thing wanting to complete his happiness, and that was a son—he had no male heir to his throne. In vain he ordered prayers to be put up at the mosques—in vain he commanded his holy men to fast—in vain he fasted himself, and imposed several mortifications upon himself and his court, his wishes were never granted, for his

wives only brought forth daughters. Not a year, scarcely a month, passed, that in despair he did not take to himself a new wife, and still daughters were born to him; he sent discreet emissaries throughout all parts of his kingdom to discover the families whose daughters might be famous for the procreation of the male species, but still when such were sent to him, his evil destiny only added to his female stock. His daughters, in the meanwhile, were growing up to be a formidable body in the state, although, according to prescribed rules, they did not appear in public, but were strictly confined to the harem.

Still there were not wanting busy bodies and agitators, who made them believe that as it was evidently the intention of inevitable destiny to deprive the kingdom of a male heir, so it was plain that, in accordance with the customs of other countries, females were henceforth to fill that post.

In consequence of the spreading of such a doctrine, the harem became the seat of the most extravagant expectations, and the Shah

became daily more and more anxious to set the question at rest by the birth of a son. At length, in utter despair, he determined to make a pilgrimage to a holy man, who lived upon one of the highest pinnacles of the mountain Alborj, and who was said to know all things, being enabled by his science to make even destiny occasionally bend to his desire.

To effect this, the Shah had recourse to his own astrologers, who, having consulted the stars, announced, with terror in their looks, that throughout the whole range of their observations they could not discover any conjunction of the planets favourable to such an undertaking.

The King, who was seldom angry, upon this occasion grew violent with rage, and declared that he would first discard his own wise men, and then go to a neighbouring kingdom, and there seek the aid of other astrologers who would, he made no doubt, afford him the information he wanted. Having set his mind upon this expedition, he ordered the ceremonial thereof as follows:

Every one was enjoined to array himself in mourning, wearing the coarsest clothes, abstaining from dyeing either beard, eye-brows or nails, but to make use of a dark-coloured turban. No one was to smoke tobacco or to drink wine; and the bitterest coffee was to be generally administered.

As the procession made its way, the heralds, appointed for the purpose, were, at stated intervals, to stoop down to the earth, and gathering up dust throw it into the air, crying *Hak, Hak, Hak,* dust! dust! dust!

The day before they reached the holy man, everybody was to make a rent in the seam of his garment at least two spans long, and this was not to be sown up again until it should be known whether or not the Shah's petition for a son had been heard. With these and such like regulations, the procession was ordered on a certain day to hold itself in readiness to depart, the King in the meanwhile, preparing himself by constant prayer, unceasing ablutions, and great abstinence from everything agreeable.

The exit from the city was through a long street, at the extremity of which stood a bridge. Near this bridge in a miserable den, barely weather proof, lived a wretched being, a woman, with scarcely a rag to cover her nakedness, whose history was a mystery, and who had resided there for many years. There was a degree of masculine fierceness in her aspect, which rendered her the terror of timid persons, and an object of curiosity to others.

She would associate with no one; her food was of the coarsest kind, often of carrion, and she was so proud that she never would accept of anything better, unless driven to the greatest straits.

The principal peculiarity in her person was the want of the right breast, which appeared to have been crushed or seared off: but this she was careful to keep concealed from the public gaze. She was usually called the Mad One, but those who pretended to be well acquainted with her history whispered that she was a Hemezen, one of that strange nation composed entirely of women.

On the day of the Shah's departure, it was remarked that she appeared more than usually excited, having taken post upon the roof of her miserable cot—her eyes constantly turned in the direction of the city gate.

As soon as she perceived the head of the procession appear, arming herself with a long staff, and contrary to her custom, she bared her right breast, whilst at the same time disposing of her tattered garments in folds over her person, she stood in a prominent attitude, her long black hair streaming in the wind. She waited with apparent impatience, muttering to herself, until the Shah himself appeared, when suddenly with aloud voice, to the astonishment of all present, she broke out into the following words:

"Stop oh King! whither art thou going? art thou mad to go thus, seeking a son from an old man. Come to me and I will tell thee whither to go;—go to the country of women, go where man is hated and proscribed—there thou wilt find one who will give thee a son—curses will

fall upon thy country shouldst thou not heed my words !"

These words rung upon the ears of the Shah, his vizier and his courtiers, as the warnings of fate. Every one, their faces uplifted, eyed the extraordinary being before them with looks of astonishment. The procession paused—the King himself, who had set off with a heart broken by ill-boding and apprehension, unsupported by his astrologers, and uncheered by good omens, and who, moreover, had felt his horse stumble at the threshold of the city gate, paused uncertain what to do— whether to return or to proceed.

His grand vizier, who never had been the advocate of the present undertaking, on perceiving the indecision of his royal master, approached him with every demonstration of the greatest respect, and first touching the ground with his hand, lifted it to his head and said :

" I am your sacrifice—oh Centre of the Universe ! this mad woman's words are wonderful words !—may the King live for ever !—perhaps

wisdom may come from insanity; and light shine from darkness, and if so, why should we not court destiny after this manner, rather than by the dangers of a long journey."

"True you have said," answered the King, "let us return—order the woman to our private hall of audience, and whatever shall be, so be it."

Upon this the whole procession returned whence it came, whilst the woman was straightway mounted upon a horse, and so conducted to the royal palace.

Having been brought before the King, she was closely questioned, and her answers having excited much curiosity, she was commanded to recite her whole story, which with much mildness of look but with an air of independence she did as follows.

STORY OF A HEMEZEN OR AMAZON.

"What would you know from a poor outcast like me? what can I say, but that I am become mad from excess of misery—still, such

as I am, your country has protected me. I have eaten its salt, and of such advantages I must not be unmindful, therefore whatever return I can make, upon my head and eyes be it! Give ear to me, oh Shah! for, wretched as I am, I may lead you to know things of which you are ignorant, and which may change your destinies, and that of your whole race.

"I am a Hemezen;—every one knows that we profess to be man-haters; in our country no male is allowed to reside. My mother was one of our chiefs, and only consented to bring a child into the world from a sense of public duty. Who my father was I know not, nor does it much signify, for he was driven from among us at the appointed time, according to the laws of our community. I grew up one of the straightest and strongest of my sex, and, although what is called beauty is despised among us as unworthy the ambition of a rational being, still I was not ignorant that I was handsome. As I approached to womanhood, steps were taken to fit me for becoming a warrior, and, being robust, it was ordained that

I should wield the spear and the bow, in preference to the shield; in consequence my right breast was withered; I was taught to perform all the exercises; before I was fifteen, I could manage the wildest horse, hit the smallest mark with an arrow, and had learnt the art of throwing the noose, nor was it long before my courage was brought to the test. Our nation was at war with a band of mountaineers—men who had ventured to profane our territory with their presence;—we attacked them, and conquered;—we drove the miscreants from before us, and, let me say the truth, I proved myself a true Hemezen—but for the misery of my future life, it was my destiny to wound one youth in so desperate a manner, that he fell a prisoner into our hands. He would have been slain on the spot had I not interfered; he was fatally handsome, and alas! after all I am but a woman. He was taken to my maternal home, and there tended with care, but, need I say it? I committed the crime of loving him; a mutual affection grew up between us, and when he was well enough to

take his departure, I could not bear the thought of seeing him leave us, I yielded to his persuasions and followed him. Oh me! need I say how much I have since deplored such a step; he proved totally unworthy of my love.

"After wandering some time with him in the Persian dominions, we took up our residence in one of the great towns, where I soon discovered that his love had ceased to exist — ceased did I say? he superadded the atrocity of the basest ingratitude, for I found that no longer loving me as his wife, he had determined to sell me as his slave.

"But little did he know what a Hemezen can do when her anger is once roused; I determined to flee by myself, and to seek refuge and a livelihood in some distant country; but in so doing, I resolved first to be revenged—the traitor learnt but too late the difference between a woman's love and a woman's hate, and, having left him to seek what burial he might from the hand of the stranger, I fled hitherwards.

"For days and nights I wandered over

arid mountains and pathless deserts, subsisting upon the food prepared by Providence for the wild beasts of the field; at length my steps brought me, oh King! to the foot of your throne, and here I have subsisted, like an outcast as I am, upon the charity of your subjects. Shall I not then return such benefits in the best way I am able?—Give ear then! I will proceed to mine own country; you shall send me thither with honour—I will procure for you a maiden from our tribe who shall give you a son, for the Hemezens rarely ever give birth to daughters; he will be your heir, the perplexities which surround your kingdom shall be at an end, and, Inshallah! the poor wretch who has so long been a suppliant at your gate, will shew her gratitude."

Upon hearing these words, which produced a considerable effect upon all present, the King looked to his grand vizier, who being celebrated for his wisdom, was expected to discover whether the proposal made by the Hemezen was founded upon deceit or truth.

His majesty was evidently bent upon closing at once with the strange female's proposal, and despatching her forthwith upon her em-

bassy, but, being accustomed to repose upon his minister's foresight and prudence, he addressed the latter as follows :—

"We are willing to be guided by your advice on this occasion, but, as Allah is great, decide what is to be done, for the King is impatient of delay."

Upon this the vizier answered: "Your humble slave is your sacrifice, and only requires a few minutes to question the woman before he decides."

Upon which, with the King's permission, he retired into another apartment, and there having questioned her upon what appeared doubtful, and her answers proving satisfactory, he straightway returned to his royal master and informed him, he was of opinion that the expedition should take place immediately.

Upon this there ensued a great commotion throughout the court; preparations for a long journey were ordered, fit persons to accompany the woman were appointed, letters were written, firmans issued and sealed, presents prepared, and a lucky day and hour were secured by the astrologers, for the commencement of this new undertaking.

It was not long ere the embassy was on its road, and, in order to give it importance, the grand vizier sent his son to direct its operations, and moreover issued instructions how he was to act, in case the woman should prove false.

She, having been duly furnished with clothes, (though not with a veil, for the Hemezens do not cover their faces like Mahommedan women,) was mounted upon a handsome horse, which she managed with great dexterity, and graced the procession by the native dignity of her manner.

Prayers were put up in all the mosques for the success of the embassy, and it was announced, for the consolation of the royal mind, that nothing could be more fortunate than the moment when the King's letter of credentials passed over the threshold of the city gate.

In the meanwhile this event had produced no small sensation among the King's daughters in the harem. They declared themselves ill-used because the Shah, their father, would not abide by the decrees of fate, but was determined still to expect a son; and these complaints were made with so little reserve that they could not fail being repeated to him.

The good King again had recourse to his grand vizier's counsels, who advised that husbands should be provided for all who were of a marriageable age without delay, and to this effect messages were sent to the various princes and governors of provinces, of whom there were many tributary to the state of Bukhara, announcing the honour conferred upon them, and that they each forthwith should make preparations for receiving a King's daughter for a wife. This was agreeable news to the ladies, whatever it might be to the princes and governors, for, weary of their lives in the harem, they longed for more liberty, a privilege they were more likely to enjoy as wives than as unmarried women. But this change in their circumstances did not produce any in their feelings concerning the succession to the throne, and, as fast as they married, their first care was to influence their husband's minds to take part against their father in his new arrangements for the acquisition of a male heir.

The King grew impatient for the return of his embassy, for the time had now elapsed

when it might appear. He felt that his hopes of more offspring diminished at the close of each revolving year, and consequently he was more and more impatient to witness the result of this last attempt for realizing his wishes. At length, one fine spring day, a messenger was seen to pass in haste through the city gates, and, making his way to the palace, having alighted from his horse was taken before the King, boots on his feet and whip in hand, and there he announced, that the returning embassy was only a day's march from the city, and was conducting with it a most beautiful princess, niece of the Queen of the Hemezens, as a wife to the King. He was instantly invested with a dress of honour, and the news was soon spread throughout the city, giving great joy to those who were really well-wishers to the state, but clouding the brows of all who were satisfied with things as they were, and particularly those of the ladies in the harem.

A deputation on the grandest scale was ordered to be in readiness to issue from the city on the next morning—to proceed to meet the new Queen and conduct her with all honour

and magnificence to the arms of the expectant King. But here a difficulty presented itself, for his Majesty having ordered his principal daughters and their mothers to issue forth on this errand, they in their ill humour, peremptorily refused to go. No entreaties could prevail upon them to accede to the Shah's wishes, and consequently in opposition to his usual lenity, he was obliged to use coercion, and to order a bastinado on the soles of the feet to be administered to the most refractory, which proved of considerable use in persuading the remainder to attend.

The whole city turned out to witness the arrival of the new Queen, and truly it was a sight novel to the inhabitants, for she appeared unveiled, according to the fashion of her country, mounted upon a superb horse, though but meanly caparisoned. A bow and quiver full of arrows were slung at her back, she carried a small spear in her hand, a shield was on her arm, and her head was adorned by a small iron helmet, inlaid with gold, which fitted tightly to her head, and from which streamed a peacock's feather. She was young, though a masculine beauty, formed

like a wrestler, with eyes darting determination, and with a self-possessed carriage and demeanour, totally unlike the soft and effeminate beings who live shut up in harems, and whose faces are never permitted to meet the eye of man. At her side rode the elder Hemezen beaming with delight at the success of her embassy, and behind her followed several others, armed to the teeth, and declaring their prowess and contempt of mankind by their bold looks and independent carriage. The young Queen eyed the multitude around with apparent indifference, as if she would have said, I am doing you all great honour in condescending to come on such an errand as this; but these looks were greeted by all as the promise of the future prince, whom she was to give them for their future sovereign.

The Shah himself in a magnificent tent, pitched a parasang distant from the city, received her in person, and it need not be said how overjoyed he was to possess so precious a Queen. He displayed the utmost magnificence of his court to welcome her. The tent, which was supported by fifty gilded columns, was resplendent with mirrors and painted panels; the

walls, composed of rich stuffs, were embroidered in open lattice work; the finest carpets were spread on terraces formed for the occasion, and the softest cushions placed in convenient positions to recline against; fountains threw up refreshing streams in front, whilst the softest and most costly perfumes embalmed the air. Out of compliment to the customs of the Hemezens, the Shah did not receive his Queen with a long train of women, but required the presence of his principal warriors, who, clad in their most resplendent armour, made a line for her to walk through as she alighted from her horse. At this she seemed much pleased, and when at length she reached the King, who rose from his seat to receive her, she paused not to take off her boots, but equipped in her travelling dress, with her arms, her bow and arrows suspended to her back, pressed forward and made him an obeisance after the fashion of her own country.

To this flattering reception, succeeded entertainments of the most costly nature, during which the riches of the empire were exhibited, and in which were displayed all sorts of pas-

times that could give pleasure to the people as well as to the court. The only dissatisfied individuals were the ladies of the royal harem, who, since this influx of masculine females, appeared to sink into insignificance; but revenge was brooding in their hearts, and they only awaited the opportunity to indulge it.

As months rolled on, the expectations of the Shah and his people, to the universal joy and delight, were declared about to be realized; the young Queen promised to make good their hopes. Every expedient that could be devised to render Heaven propitious was resorted to, and the good Shah already began to replenish his coffers in the hope that in due time he should be called upon to make such universal rejoicings throughout the kingdom, as would make his people drunk with happiness. The day at length arrived, the whole Ulemah were required to fast and pray, every doctor and midwife in the country was brought into requisition, and it was generally supposed that if, after all, a daughter were to ensue, the King's wrath would be so inflamed that he would first kill all his daughters with their mothers, and then go and hide his head in a distant

pilgrimage for the rest of his days;—but it was not so ordained. To the joy of the nation, a son was born; the King put no bounds to his delight, a general thanksgiving was ordered in the mosques, the shops were shut and decorated with boughs, the whole of the population put on new clothes and perambulated the streets, saying nothing but "Mobarek," and wherever people were inclined, they got drunk with wine without any fear of the priests. No pen can describe the festivities at court. The royal treasures were emptied in paying for the extravagant joy of the King, who daily devised some new mode of expressing his satisfaction. One of the persons principally singled out for the royal munificence, was the original Hemezen, she the real cause of this prosperity. The miserable hut which she had so long occupied, was now converted into a magnificent palace, and she was so gifted by the King, that she was enabled to live there in honour and dignity during the rest of her days.

The new born prince became the theme of every tongue; he was announced to be the finest child that had ever been seen, and, strange to relate, there was a small bow and

arrow stamped on his left breast, which, so the wise men assured the King, proclaimed that he would become a man of great prowess; wise women and grey heads said that the marks denoted the character of the mother, who was dreaming of her own country and pursuits, when she ought to have been thinking of her child. By name he was called Hezzar Mushkil, or The Thousand Difficulties, to make him remember through life the anxiety which had attended his birth, and, on the day of his being named, his mother insisted that he should sleep near her own favourite horse, his head resting on a sword, in order thereby to infuse into his nature the love of arms and horsemanship—the two things most prized by the Hemezens.

As soon as he was weaned, in accordance with the agreement or treaty made with the Queen of the Hemezens, the mother of the royal babe returned to her own country, loaded with the gratitude and the presents of the Shah and his people for having so well fulfilled her part of the contract, whilst she confided the care of her son to her countrywoman, the ambassadress who agreed to remain and bring him up, enjoying the title and privileges of Dedeh, or nurse, besides

the distinction of being the acknowledged benefactress of the state of Bukhara. She entered upon the performance of her duties with determined zeal and watchfulness, for she was aware of the enemies which the child possessed in the harem. She never allowed any food to pass its lips, until it had first past through her own, nor ever laid herself down to rest until she was assured that no harm could accrue to her charge during the night.

In the meanwhile, although the King was in a state of utter enchantment at the possession of a son, still his existence was much embittered by the conduct of his daughters and their ambitious mothers. Rumours of disaffection in the provinces began to be spread abroad, and it was not disguised that such feelings originated in insidious measures adopted by his sons-in-law and their wives. The grand vizier, who was ever watchful over the interests of his master, continued to marry off the daughters as fast as he found husbands, for he dreaded the existence of domestic enemies which might endanger the safety of the child; but his sagacity was at fault when he heard of the state of

the provinces. He made a display of the royal armies by calling them together in the summer, and causing the King to take journies through the disaffected parts; but well he knew that no enmity, when once roused, was equal to that which exists between blood relations. He did his best to remove such enmities, whilst he was careful to take hostages for the good behaviour of persons under suspicion, wherever he could do so with advantage.

Whilst the affairs of the kingdom were thus administered, the Prince Hezzar Mushkil was daily growing up in strength and comeliness. Everything in him announced a remarkable character; all his pursuits had a manly tendency, his games were miniature pictures of war; he begun early to shew great skill in the exercises of the body, and as soon as his little legs could bestride a horse's body, he was seen clinging on with undaunted courage.

Under the direction of his nurse, he learnt whatever a Hemezen could teach him, and, in addition to his own manliness of nature, appeared to imbibe all the energy of her national character. He had never been

permitted to enter the walls of the royal harem, therefore he was totally ignorant of the effeminate manners of its inhabitants, nor did he know one of his sisters by sight, so much had the family feuds influenced all his earliest habits.

The King's daughters, married and single, together with their mothers and husbands, finding how entirely they had sunk into insignificance since the existence of this son, were burning with impatience for an opportunity of exhibiting their anger. The governor of the town of Bikend, who had married one of the said daughters, was a proud and haughty man; he was robust in person and had been successful in the field. His wife had so worked upon his feelings that he chose to consider himself ill-used, and he, acting upon his brothers-in-law, who were acted upon by their wives, became, in time, the chief of a disaffected league, all bent on the destruction of their hereditary prince, and future monarch. The King who was now advancing in age, spent his days in the peaceable enjoyment of his power, and, secure in the possession of an heir, became negligent of the affairs of the state.

By the time Hezzar Mushkil had attained the age of seventeen years, the whole of the provinces, with a few exceptions, were ripe for revolt, a state of things which the grand vizier, with all his sagacity, had not been able to suppress. At length, after much difficulty, the King having been made sensible of the necessity of vigour and action, consented to bring the principal offender to justice, and ordered the governor of Bikend to the foot of his throne to give an account of his proceedings; this was the signal for revolt, and, he became *yaghi*, in other words he was a declared rebel; he refused to come, tore the royal firman in half, and shut the gates of his town.

When news of this event reached the King, the Prince Hezzar Mushkil was present, and it was remarked that, unable to retain the usual respect which he paid to his father, he exclaimed,

"Thanks be to Allah, the hand has got to the sword at last," words which were soon echoed about the court, and which shewed how long the youth had, even at his early age, been burning to distinguish himself in battle.

Orders were immediately given to assemble troops, and to march upon the disaffected city. Hezzar Mushkil entreated that he might be sent with them, and volunteered to serve in any capacity, for he had only one desire, and that was to be engaged in actual war.

It may be supposed how loath the King was to accede to his request, but when the General in command of the expedition, who was an old and experienced soldier, bound himself by an oath on the Shah's head not to allow the Prince to run into danger, he was permitted to go.

It was then that his Dedeh insisted upon buckling on her armour, taking her bow and arrows, and accompanying her charge to the field, which was also granted, after a promise exacted on the part of the prince, that she should keep at a distance when he might be engaged in the field.

She, however, who put more faith in the powers of her own countrywomen than in the military knowledge of the nation she served, secretly dispatched a messenger to the Prince's mother, with a letter stating the predicament in

which the country was placed, and requesting that a strong detachment of Hemezens, properly commanded, might forthwith be sent to aid Hezzar Mushkil in this his first military essay.

The kingdom of Bukhara having been long in a state of peace, much delay occurred before a military expedition properly equipped could be set on foot; which delay was taken every advantage of by the disaffected and rebellious, as it gave them time to deliberate and to assemble.

It had been represented to the King by the flatterers always to be found near thrones, that this revolt was one of very trifling importance, and that his troops had only to appear, to put it down at once; they added, as soon as it was known that the Prince Hezzar Mushkil was there, the world would exclaim, what dog will now venture to shew his face?

The rebels, who had many such friends at court, were anxious to confirm these reports, hoping thus to diminish the force about to be despatched against them, and they were not

frustrated in their expectations—the troops sent were inadequate to the service.

The King refused to allow any part of his body guard, who were the choicest part of his army, to be selected for the expedition, and consequently troops raised in a hurry were sent, ill equipped, and totally without reliance upon each other. A strong escort of cavalry, specially ordered to guard the person of the Prince, was the most efficient part of the little army.

A favourable conjunction of the planets having been announced, the expedition set out. Hezzar Mushkil was in the highest spirits; mounted on a fine horse, armed at all points, he was the admiration of every beholder, whilst his Dedeh, throwing off her age and infirmities, made every effort to shew herself worthy of such a charge, as well as to keep up the warlike reputation of her nation.

They marched by slow stages towards the object of attack, the expedition partaking more of the nature of a military parade than one destined to perform real feats of arms. At

length it entered the territory of Bikend, and then came to a halt, in order to send forward an herald to summon the city to surrender under pain of the royal displeasure.

The army, however, had not long to await the return of this officer, for he had scarcely proceeded many parasangs, before he fell in with a considerable body of the enemy's cavalry—the forerunner of the main body of their army.

He returned with terror in his looks, exaggerating the numbers he had met, and impressed, from what he had heard, with the dangerous tendency of the insurrection. This piece of intelligence was at first received by the Shah's general with great contempt. "Whose dogs are they," said he, "who thus can venture to appear against the Shah?" but when he found it confirmed and doubly confirmed, he then became as apprehensive as he had been the reverse, and began at once to talk of a retreat. This intention having been mentioned to the Prince, he at once opposed himself violently to such a measure, and avowed that if the general put it into execution, he

himself at the head of his own escort would charge the rebels.

The general, in this dilemma was strangely perpexed what orders to issue, but having at length been roused to action by exclamations such as the following:

"Whose dogs are they!—after all we are the King's servants! what can wretched rebels do!" exclamations made by the arrogant and ignorant, he determined to move his troops onwards.

Hezzar Mushkil was the first in the field on the following morning; as fast as the troops filed off from their posts, he was there to encourage them. His Dedeh in the meanwhile was not without apprehension as to what might be the result of the day, and sent a messenger to the Hemezens to hurry their march. The King's troops encouraged by the Prince moved in advance, and soon came in sight of the enemy.

The skirmishers first began the battle, advancing with precaution behind every elevation of ground, rock, or stone which might afford

protection, and were then succeeded by the *chirkajies* or champions, who exhibited their horsemanship, but nothing effective was done decisive of the victory—a state of things which so much exhausted the Prince's patience, that he entreated the commander-in-chief to order a general onset or *yúrish*, which might bring their troops into immediate contact with the rebels.

The cautious general, seeing that numbers were greatly on the side of the enemy, was reluctant to risk the event, and would willingly have drawn off his troops, but the governor of Bikend, who commanded the rebel army, resuming courage at the slow and timid proceedings of the royal troops, ordered a movement in advance which brought on the crisis.

The armies engaged, and the superiority of the rebels was soon apparent, for after a short struggle, the king's troops began to shew symptoms of disorder, notwithstanding the energy and courage evinced by Hezzar Mushkil. Matters were in this uncertain state, when a cloud of dust was seen in the distance, which was soon succeeded by the clatter of arms and warlike shouts—shouts not like those of men,

but shrill screams, that were soon found to proceed from an army of Hemezens. The noise of tongues was greater than the clang of arms, for all the privates talked, and would make themselves heard.

The Dedeh from a state of apprehension, was wound up into joy and a confidence of success. This army was commanded by the Prince's grand-mother, a general of the greatest skill and experience among the Hemezens, whilst the second in command was his own mother. Hezzar Mushkil was overjoyed, and without waiting to embrace his relations, rushed on the enemy as soon as he heard his grand-mother give the word to charge.

Such an extraordinary clatter of arms, horses, and women's tongues had never before been heard; a general discharge of arrows first took place, which tended to discompose the enemy, and was followed by a charge sword in hand, which was eminently successful. Nothing could exceed the vigour of the Hemezens—they rode in compact bodies, exciting each other by wild screams, and finally carried every thing before them.

Great were the feats performed on both sides.

Many of the Hemezens individually greatly distinguished themselves. One of the Prince's aunts, in particular, his mother's elder sister, performed feats of unheard of valour, for it is a received fact among them, that at a certain time of life they become desperate, and fight like lionesses. Several were wounded, and it was remarked how soon they were relieved, for being all "handy at their needles," as soon as one required assistance, another instantly jumped off her horse, and having a needle and thread at hand, at once sewed up the wound.

The rebels who had no idea that they should be opposed by such troops, were struck with a panic and fled in all directions. It was then that Hezzar Mushkil took the lead, and little considering that in his zeal to destroy the fugitives, he might be slaying nephews, and, perhaps, brothers-in-law, multitudes of whom were incorporated in the rebel army, followed by his escort, and kept in view by his old Dedeh, he pressed onward sword in hand, dealing blows right and left without remorse. Mounted on the fleetest horse in the army, he consequently outstripped every one,

and heedless of caution, allowed himself to be impelled forward by his ardour in pursuit until he was left entirely alone — he found himself, at length, engaged in a labyrinth of broken ground, from which he vainly endeavoured to extricate himself before the night closed in. It was then that he began to feel the extent of his imprudence, his horse's energies being utterly exhausted, and himself overpowered by fatigue. Hopelessly did he toil up one steep and down the sides of another, until he was totally bewildered as to the direction of the armies, and the distance which he might be from habitations.

In this state, he wandered about till near midnight, when no longer able to withstand the weariness which assailed him, he laid himself down at the side of his horse. He lay buried in the profoundest sleep until the rays of the rising sun darting into his face, aroused him. He cast his eyes around with dismay, perceiving nothing in view but an arid tenantless wilderness, without any one object to serve as a compass by which to guide his steps. But what was his still greater horror, on looking about in every direction, to find himself without a

horse! In vain he shouted and called, in vain he wandered through all the inequalities of the surrounding tract, he could see no horse, much less any living being who could give him any account of it. It was then that he could have almost wept in despair, but when the reflection came to him, that he was a great Prince, heir to a powerful kingdom and the conqueror of an army of rebels, superior in numbers, he shook off this weakness, and determined to do his utmost towards extricating himself from his position. He felt, that when found to be missing, his attendants, and, indeed, the whole army, grandmother, mother, Dedeh and all would not fail to seek him, and he trusted that ere an hour was over, he would be restored to his friends.

In the mean while, he resolved to proceed on foot in the direction which he supposed was the right one, but as ill-luck would have it, he took precisely the contrary road.

He walked on invigorated by the morning air, with all the buoyancy of youthful spirits, and, heedless of consequences, scarcely ever looked back, so confident was he of following the right path. As he walked on, he principally

speculated in his mind upon the abrupt disappearance of his horse, and it occurred to him that during his sleep he had heard strange cries, as if of jackals and scuffling of feet, which made him suppose that the poor beast had been chased, and subsequently devoured by wild beasts. He continued to walk on, but the further he went, the further in fact he dived into the lonely waste of the desert, whose general aspect of dreariness, was enough to daunt the intrepidity of the most valiant. Hezzar Mushkil, at length, sat down totally uncertain what course to pursue—he now felt that he had entirely taken a wrong direction—what was he to do? To return was fruitless, could he find his way back, even if he tried? To remain stationary, was to die of hunger, or to become the prey of wild animals. Taking out his dagger from its sheath, he held it perpendicularly towards the ground, and then let it fall at hazard—the direction in which it fell, he determined should guide his steps. This piece of superstition he had learnt from his Dedeh, and he remembered it now with joy—"Perhaps," said he, "fate will do well for me. It is in vain

now to repine at my folly—if once I get again to Bukhara, I will be more cautious; this piece of experience will be of use to me through life."

He began to walk forwards again, now stimulated as much by hunger as by his other necessities. He continued to drag himself slowly along until night, when he almost fell from fatigue and weakness. His mind smote him with a multitude of apprehensions. Without succour—without food, he felt that he must die; then the thoughts of his aged and distracted father came before him—the triumph of his sisters and their mothers, also glanced through his thoughts. He extended himself behind a mound of earth, and worn out by fatigue, passed the night, sleeping at intervals, and starting ever and anon with feverish apprehension. In the morning, again he tried to press onwards, but his legs almost refused their office, so exhausted was he from want of food. He felt that soon he must close his eyes for ever. He wept—sorely he deplored his imprudence. He lay down on the broad face of the desert, as he thought, to die.

Scarcely had he been there an hour, ere he

felt a rush of wind and heard the flapping of wings—to his dismay he discovered that a large bird of prey had made a descent upon him, taking him for a dead carcase, and he perceived that it was followed by a long train of others. He summoned up all his strength, and rising on his legs, drew his sword to defend himself from what he feared was his final doom. The bird, apparently balked of its feast, withdrew to a rising ground, as if to wait for what it was certain would ultimately fall to its share, whilst the remaining birds, now arriving in great numbers, hovered about, and uttered wild cries. Hezzar Mushkil, who found that he had not much strength left, now that he was hard pressed, exclaimed in piteous accents, "Allah! allah! help, help to the heir of the throne of Bukhara."

There he stood with his sword in his right hand, whilst his left was extended towards heaven. To his utter astonishment, and to his exceeding great joy, he had scarcely uttered this exclamation, ere the sounds of distant bells—the bells of a caravan, sweeping over the undulations of the plain, struck his ear. He could scarcely believe his senses—he felt

new vigour as the sounds approached and staggering forwards, perceived two horsemen at full gallop advancing. His first idea was that they were some of his own people in search of him, and this was confirmed when he saw them alight from their horses and run to meet him, but he was soon undeceived, for instead of waiting till he had spoken or bending the knee in his presence, they rushed upon him—threw him down—disarmed him—robbed him of everything he possessed, then stripping him to his shirt and drawers dragged him forcibly on, tying his arms behind his back with his own waistband, when he exclaimed:

"What are you about, men! I am the Prince Hezzar Mushkil, are ye mad to treat me thus?"

The two ruffians, for they were rude athletic men and armed to the teeth, paid no heed to these words, but commenced quarrelling with each other, one asserting that the prisoner belonged to him, and the other insisting the contrary.

"I saw him first," said the one, "the sun was just a spear high when I first caught sight of him, therefore, he is my slave."

"That's a lie," exclaimed the other, "come, let us go, we'll burn its father whatever it may be, said I; and you rejoined, 'and its mother, grand-father and grand-mother and all its ancestry besides'—that's what you said; therefore, as I spoke first, he is mine."

"What words are these," rejoined the first, who was the superior in appearance, "I swear I saw him first, by the beard of Iman Mousa—by the head of the Prophet, I swear. He is my slave, upon this there are not two words."

"Whatever you may say is a lie," said the other with violent gesture, "do you see this arm," bearing a brawny arm to the elbow, "this arm is ready to come to the help of this tongue," lolling his tongue out at the same time, "and if you or any one dare to take my lawful slave from me, he and my sword shall soon become acquainted."

"Don't throw unmeaning words into the air," roared out the other, at the same time giving a blow to the unfortunate prince to quicken his pace, "you — your arm—your tongue—and your sword may go where your father is grilling at this very moment."

The other began to foam at the mouth with anger, whilst his eyes flashed fire, and was on the point of drawing his sword to make good his threat, when they came into close contact with the great mass of the caravan. They proceeded at once to the principal personage, a respectable looking man, his head and face well shawled up, wearing a good cloak and riding on an excellent mule well caparisoned.

"What has happened?" he exclaimed, in a tone of authority, as the two disputants approached, dragging forwards their wretched victim. "What have you there? where did you find him?"

"He is my slave," said the one.

"That is a lie," said the other, "he is mine."

"Aga Okoos, you decide," said they both, upon which they both began with vociferation, and a deluge of words to endeavour to make good their respective claims.

Aga Okoos, who was a merchant of Herat, whither the caravan was at present bound, began first by eyeing Hezzar Mushkil from head to foot with the eye of a connoisseur, as he might inspect a horse or a mule on

sale, and then said, "there is no harm in him—are you mad to be throwing words into the air after this fashion? Who can say who saw him first? You might as well dispute with yourself whether your right or your left eye saw him first. He is mine, I will give you a good price for him, and you shall each take half, so the dispute is at an end. Go, say no more."

Upon this the horsemen went away apparently satisfied, and Hezzar Mushkil was handed over to a muleteer, who was ordered to mount him for the rest of the journey. But ere he was led away, he indignantly lifted up his voice at the treatment he had received, and again affirmed that he was a Prince and heir to the throne of Bukhara. Aga Okoos, the merchant who did not care to have his bargain disturbed, would not lend an ear to this exposition, but others of the caravan who heard it, treasured up the words in their minds, for they were jealous of the apparently great hit which he had made.

"Go, go," exclaimed the merchant, "are you mad to talk thus?—a Prince, indeed!—who

finds a Prince in the desert?—go, tell no more lies, or by Allah, you will find that we do not understand child's play."

And thus the unfortunate Hezzar Mushkil was dragged forcibly away, mounted on a baggage mule between two bales of merchandize, and an old horse cloth given him to cover his nakedness. His common employment on the road was to pound coffee, and when highly honoured, he was permitted to rub his master's feet and loins, after the fatigue of a long day's ride. Often did the wretched prince sigh after the luxuries in which he had been brought up, yearn for the indulgence and devotion shewn to him by his old nurse, and long for his home. To evade the miseries of his present situation by flight was out of the question—whither could he fly—ignorant of the country, without money or friends. He hoped when he should have reached Herat, that by some good stroke of fortune he might find a favourable opportunity of asserting who he was, and in the meanwhile he gained lessons of prudence and forbearance.

The merchant who was one of the richest of

Herat, having reached his house, appointed Hezzar Mushkil to perform some of the lowest offices of a slave, seeing that he was totally ignorant of the duties of a servant, and such are the vicissitudes of life—the heir to the throne of Bukhara might have been seen sweeping the court yard or sprinkling water to lay the dust before the merchant's door. It so happened that one of the travellers by the caravan, a merchant, was the rival of Aga Okoos in trade—he frequently past the spot where Hezzar Mushkil was sweeping and sprinkling water, and remarking his beauty and superiority in his appearance to that of a common slave, remembered the words he had uttered when he was first taken, exclaiming that he was the Prince of Bukhara. He sought opportunities to enter into conversation with him, and detecting the stamp of truth in the story he related of his adventures, became interested in his fate and determined to do all in his power to alleviate his wretchedness, particularly as in so doing he would be sure to injure his rival.

This merchant was in the habit sometimes

of paying his court to the grand vizier of Herat, standing in his presence and occasionally making him a present. The very first visit he made him after his return, he related the incident of a youth having been made prisoner in the desert, asserted his conviction that he was a Prince, and heir to the throne of Bukhara, and added that he was now a slave in the household of Aga Okoos.

This excited the grand vizier's attention, who happy to entertain the King, his master, with something new, did not fail to report what the merchant had communicated to him.

The King immediately ordered Aga Okoos, and his slave to appear before him, for he would not forego so excellent an opportunity to mulct the richest merchant of Herat. Aga Okoos did not feel altogether at his ease, when he received this unseasonable summons. Hezzar Mushkil could scarcely contain his joy. As they approached the King's presence, Aga Okoos knelt down and kissed the ground, whilst his slave stood erect, the conscious dignity of high birth giving him a manly confidence. The King

gazed in silence for some time upon both, but particularly kept his eye fixed upon Hezzar Mushkil, admiring his handsome person and stately carriage; at length, he exclaimed to the merchant, "O man, say what is this you have done? Whose dog are you, who dare to make a slave of a King's son?"

"As I am your humble sacrifice," said the merchant, trembling from head to foot with apprehension, "I am ignorant of the import of your Majesty's words. I bought the slave at a venture as we travelled in the caravan. He was brought to me naked and miserable, and I clothed him and took care of him."

"So, is it," said the King. "Now speak," said he, turning to Hezzar Mushkil, "tell me who you are."

"My father is King of Bukhara," said the Prince. "I am heir to his throne. After having vanquished the rebels of Bikend, I followed the fugitives, till I lost my way in the desert, that is my story—this man knows it; and now O King, I claim your skirt, and permission to return to my country."

"Seize that dog," pointing to Aga Okoos, said the king to his servants, "and beat him till I cry stop—he will not steal King's sons again."

Upon which the merchant was straightway seized, his feet thrown into the air, and soundly beaten. He was then dragged away, his slave taken from him, and the King of Herat remained the disposer of the fate of Hezzar Mushkil.

The Prince of Bukhara did not improve his position by falling into the hands of the King of Herat, who was a faithless, cruel and avaricious man. Aga Okoos after having been well beaten, was also heavily fined, but far from effectually releasing Hezzar Mushkil, the King only laid plans how he might best secure him for his own service. He treated him, at first, with some appearance of kindness, and gave him into the custody of the grand vizier, with orders to be provided with clothes, and fed at his expence, but the grand vizier was also avaricious, and thus the Prince faring ill, willingly would have fled the city, had he possessed the opportunity of so doing. The King

contemplated the hope of enriching his coffers, by exacting a ransom from the King of Bukhara for his son, and to Hezzar Mushkil's daily entreaty that he might be allowed to depart, he lent a deaf ear, putting him off with excuses and lies. In the meanwhile, the wretched youth was almost reduced to beg his bread among the menials of the Shah's household, so ill did the grand vizier provide for his daily necessities. He was, however, strictly watched, and orders given at the city gates, that he should not be allowed a free egress, and there we will for the present leave him, in order to see what was taking place in the kingdom of Bukhara.

The battle with the rebels being over, and the Hemezens and the royal troops a little recovered from the excitement of gaining a victory, every one began to enquire what had become of the Prince Hezzar Mushkil? A general search was ordered, but concluded without effect—his own escort asserting, that owing to the superior speed of his horse, he had been led away in pursuit of the fugitives beyond their powers of overtaking him, and

that when night came on they entirely lost all traces of him.

The Dedeh, at this intelligence, became almost frantic with grief, and instantly calling for a fresh horse, asserted that she would rather die on the field, than relinquish the hope of finding him. The general of the King's troops, considering that Hezzar Mushkil had been placed under his special charge, became alarmed for his own head, whilst the Prince's mother and grandmother, shewed as much interest as their nature permitted for a man child. The whole country was now overrun with the royal troops in search of Hezzar Mushkil, and had the rebels been on the alert, they might easily have redeemed their lost victory. At length the Dedeh, after she had riden for a whole day without leaving the saddle, espied in the distance on the face of the desert a dark object or objects to which she instantly bent her steps. There she found a congregation of vultures standing round about, and gorged with the spoils of the carcass of a dead horse, upon which they had been feasting. As she approached, the

birds could scarcely flee from her, so surfeited were they—this circumstance would not have been heeded, had she not discovered a saddle, and its trappings strewn in all directions, and these she recognised to have belonged to her beloved Hezzar Mushkil. The transition in her thoughts from this sight to his death, was instantaneous, and she made such piteous lamentations, that even the gorged birds were scared. She threw herself from off her horse and prostrating herself on the saddle, lay entranced upon the ground, moaning and weeping in most deplorable accents. Her attendants having come to her aid, she was persuaded to remount, and, accompanied by the sad remains of the saddle, was conveyed to head-quarters, not without a long and fruitless search having been made for the body, naturally expected to be found near that of the horse.

It was a sad and woeful day, when this intelligence reached the King of Bukhara. The interval was long ere his attendants and courtiers could venture to unfold to him the great loss he had sustained. He perceived by

their looks that all was not right, and although much rejoicing had taken place on account of the victory, yet it was evident something was still untold. Vainly did the wretched monarch enquire for his son, he only received evasive answers, until on the arrival of the Dedeh, the grand vizier thought it adviseable that he no longer should be kept in ignorance, and he determined himself to make known the dire event. With ashes sprinkled on his head, and torn clothes, he approached with a sorrowful step, and informed the King of the fears entertained for the safety of his son. No words can describe the scene which took place. The cries and wailings of the bereft father were heard all over the palace. An universal silence took place throughout the city.

After the first paroxysm of the King's grief had subsided, he shut himself up in his most private apartment and refused food. No one ventured to approach him. He derived no comfort from his daughters or their mothers, for they were traitors. The grand vizier alone

ventured, at length, to approach him, and when he did so, with accents of comfort on his lips, he suggested that as the remains of the Prince had not been discovered, there might still be hope he was yet alive. To this hope, the unfortunate father clung with alacrity, and forthwith ordered messengers to be sent express on all the high roads, with orders to pursue their course even to the principal cities in Asia, there to make inquiries for the lost Prince.

With this temporary alleviation did he smother his fears—an alternative which did not, however, prevent him from cutting off the commander-in-chief's head, for not having sufficiently watched over the safety of his son. As for the old Hemezen, she actually pined with grief, for nothing could persuade her, that her much cherished Hezzar Mushkil was still among the living.

In the meanwhile, the King of Herat treated his prisoner as an hostage, and did not cease to lay schemes for rendering the accident which had placed him in his power a source of gain. Hezzar Mushkil, on the other

hand, planned his escape more than once, but never effectually, until having one day met with a master muleteer, who had been kind to him in the caravan, he succeeded by dint of promises to persuade him to allow him to pass as one of his mule drivers, the first time he should again leave the city.

A caravan was collecting for Ispahan, and thither the muleteer now informed him he was about to travel, having let his mules on hire to a merchant about to load carpets, (the manufacture of Herat) for that market. On the day appointed for their departure, Hezzar Mushkil disguised, in the coarse dress of a muleteer's boy, passed through the city gates without notice, and thus proceeded during the journey to perform the duties of his office, whilst joy beamed in his heart for his deliverance, though apprehensive lest his evil fortune should still persecute him, and cause him to be discovered and seized. But this was not the case—the muleteer kept his secret to the last, and after much hardship and fatigue, he was at length cheered by the minarets of Ispahan appearing to his

longing eyes. The caravan directed its steps to the usual resort of the Herat merchants, a caravanserai near the great square, called the Maiden Shah, in the centre of which is situated the royal palace. Although thus far, Hezzar Mushkil seemed to have been favoured by fortune, still it was not long before he discovered that he was mistaken, for scarcely had the last mule entered the gates of the caravanserai, than its owner, the muleteer, the only man whom the unfortunate Prince could call his friend at Ispahan, was suddenly taken ill, and notwithstanding the various remedies prescribed, died. What could he do to gain his bread, a stranger in an immense capital, without a profession and without means? Alas! he knew not. For several days, he wandered about wretched and forlorn, living upon the few pieces of money, with which his departed friend had supplied him.

The gates of the royal garden were not far distant from the place where the mules put up, and frequently he watched the time when remnants of fruit and vegetables were thrown

therefrom, to seize upon bits which might afford him nourishment. One day whilst thus waiting half famished, it so happened that he was espied by one of the master gardeners, who seeing a strong, well made youth in distress, accosted him and inquired whether he was willing to work as a labourer. Hezzar Mushkil eagerly assented, and forthwith acceded to the offer. Before another half hour had elapsed he was seen, spade in hand, digging a bed, preparatory to the reception of flower seeds.

Although he had never before handled an implement of horticulture, yet his natural adroitness was such, that he soon became as efficient as the most experienced labourer, and, indeed, might fairly be said to earn his bread with the sweat of his brow. The garden in which he was employed belonged to that part of the palace allotted to the use of the ladies of the seraglio, and as no man was ever allowed to be present when they appeared, it was at particular hours only that the labourers were ordered to their work.

Here Hezzar Mushkil passed many a long day, supported in spirit by the buoyancy of youth, though never for a moment forgetting the advantages of his birth. He sighed when he recollected, as he cast his eyes over the spacious gardens and the gorgeous palace, that he too once commanded such places as supreme lord, although now condemned to labour in them as the lowest of slaves.

He felt that the recent vicissitudes of his life were working a favourable change in his character, breaking down his arrogance, and teaching him the ways of humble life, but he was also warned by a secret voice within, that, by perseverance and patience, and adherence to the dictates of prudence, he would again be restored to his position in the world. He determined to remain silent upon the subject of his birth, and only to declare himself when he should find a fitting opportunity.

Working with assiduity, he soon became a favourite with the master gardener, and was distinguished by him from among the other labourers. His fine person and handsome

face, although disguised by the coarsest of attire and much tanned by exposure to weather, possessed an air of superiority which made him remarkable even among the rude men with whom he associated, but he acted his part so well, that no one could suspect that he was in fact a king's son.

Among the labourers there was a youth, or rather boy, who, by his lively and amiable manner, attracted Hezzar Mushkil's attention. He was the son of the master gardener, and, therefore, enjoyed privileges to which the other labourers were strangers.

He frequently entered into conversation with the Prince, and excited his curiosity by what he related concerning the ladies of the court who frequented the garden. He said, that during the preceding year he had been allowed to remain when they were present, because he was then only a boy, but now that he had exceeded the appointed age, he was utterly excluded.

He had endeavoured in vain to persuade the head eunuch, an Ethiopian without mercy or

compassion, that he was still in his boyhood, but the monster would have cut his head off, so he asserted, had he been found loitering in the forbidden ground, one minute after the order for his expulsion had been issued.

"However, for all that," exclaimed the youth, "I laugh at his beard, for I still meet my friend."

"Who is your friend?" said the Prince.

"She is one of the Lady Sultaness's attendants—a wonderful maiden, who often procures for me sweet words from her mistress, which last year brought me presents, and a new suit of clothes—a wonderful maiden she is!"

"And what kind of person may the Lady Sultaness be," inquired Hezzar Mushkil.

"What can I say to that?" said the other with surprise in his accents, "such a creature has never before been seen—I tremble when I think of her; she is called the Full Moon of Beauty, but such a description is nonsense: there are no words to explain her perfections. Her cheeks are like a peach, and her eyes like black cherries—what more can I say?"

"Have you seen her often," inquired the Prince with animation.

"Oh very often when I was a boy; she often took notice of me, and said that the Shah should make me one of his *gholams*, but here I am still a gardener."

"When did you last see her; could not I see her?" inquired Hezzar Mushkil.

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed the youth. "If you had ever beheld one of those black fiends the eunuchs with their drawn swords, as they enter the garden to drive mankind from before them, you would never ask such a question;—they slay without hearing a word from any one."

"Then have you never more seen your friend?" inquired the Prince.

The gardener's son looked confused, but at length confessed that he had—"But," said he, "as you love your soul, by the salt of the King, swear that you will never mention this to any one."

He then explained that, in the centre of the inner garden stood a large octagonal summer

house, in the centre of which is a beautiful white marble fountain, around which, whenever the Lady Sultaness takes the air, are spread velvet and satin sofas and cushions; the whole building is open to every breeze, and its beauties are so much prized, that it is called the Eighth Paradise. In each angle of this building, above the door, are small closets, just large enough to receive one or even two persons. "When I know that the Lady Sultaness is to come," added the boy, "I conceal myself in one of them, and fearless of the savage negroes, I there await my friend, who, being aware of the circumstance, fails not to look up to the small window in the closet, where she is sure to see my eye gazing at her. She then manages to steal away from her companions, and we enjoy some very agreeable conversation."

"You must take me with you," said Hezzar Mushkil.

The youth upon hearing this demand grew pale with apprehension. "Are you mad," said he, "to ask me this? if even the tip of your whisker were seen by the eunuchs, before you could say

aman! aman! pray! pray! your head would be off."

The Prince did not urge his request farther on this occasion; but his curiosity was so much excited from what he had heard, that he never lost an opportunity, when alone with the young gardener, of persuading him to overcome every scruple, and allowing him to be his companion upon his next visit to the summer house.

It so fell out that the chief eunuch, that arch-demon fell ill, and this piece of news was received with joy by the gardeners, for the second in command and the under officers were known to be more lenient than their master. It was also heard with pleasure, by the women of the harem, who hating their tyrant, lost no time in persuading their mistress that during this auspicious reprieve they might enjoy a day of comparative liberty. It was, therefore, announced in the morning that the Lady Sultaness would take the air at noon, and the summer-house was accordingly prepared.

Hezzar Mushkil immediately persuaded the young gardener to take advantage of the opportunity; and before the eunuchs had

appeared to clear the gardens, the Prince and his companion were snugly secreted in their hiding place.

They heard the approach of the dispensers of life and death with awe. Their voices, when issuing their orders, were more like those of wild beasts than human beings, and whilst they were spreading the mattresses and making ready the summer-house, the Prince and the young gardener could scarcely venture to breathe, so fearful were they of being discovered.

The gardens were composed of terrasses laid out into flower beds and straight walks, intersected by alternate summer-houses and basins of water, in the midst of which fountains played and refreshed the air. Near the building prepared on this occasion was situated the largest basin, a broad and ample piece of water, clear as crystal and shaded by a profusion of trees and waving shrubs. Here when the women were left to themselves, they passed the heat of the day bathing and performing gambols in the water, and here it was said the Shah himself was wont sometimes

to solace himself from the cares of government, by taking a part in such pastimes.

There were two apertures in the closet where the Prince and the gardener were secreted—one looking towards the garden, the other within the summer-house. As soon as the eunuchs had passed, and everything was reported to be in readiness for the Lady Sultaness, the sound of women's voices, laughing, bantering and talking with joy and merriment were heard, and soon a numerous band appeared in all the freedom of the seraglio dress, unveiled, and seemingly full of determination to enjoy themselves to the utmost.

They approached in various parties: some were menials who came to prepare the special seat of their mistress, bringing with them soft cushions and silken coverlets, others bore large circular fans, others again were entrusted with musical instruments, which they placed in convenient spots, to be used as might be required. Crystal and porcelain vases containing refreshing sherbets were deposited among the most delicious fruits. Melons, grapes, peaches,

nectarines and pomegranates were heaped up in costly bowls, and spread in endless profusion on the floor, and on the margin of the sparkling fountain.

The Prince waited with impatience for the approach of the Lady Sultaness, and did not cease inquiring of his companion when she would appear. At length sounds of musical instruments and singing were heard, and in the distance, through one of the arched windows affording a view into a long avenue of the garden, was seen a procession of women, their light dresses of various and brilliant colours floating in the breeze, and their whole demeanour denoting innocent joy and freedom from constraint. Hezzar Mushkil strained his eyes to discover the object of his curiosity ; but owing to the intervention of the woman who walked before, he could not distinguish her well until she drew near, when half extended upon a silver litter, which was borne by her attendants, his eyes were greeted with a view of the Princess. He could not at first see her face, but when having quitted the litter she walked up the steps of the summer-house, and

stood erect, in all the dignity of beauty, his heart ceased to beat and his eyes could scarcely perform their office, so dazzled was he by the charms of the lovely being before him. Impelled by a dignified consciousness of birth, he would have asserted his true pretensions, and rushed forward to make himself known, but suddenly awakened to his real position, by feeling that his face rested upon the ignoble shoulders of a gardener's son, he checked his too impetuous feelings, and once again relapsed into the labourer.

The Lady Sultaness as she was usually called, was the King of Persia's favourite daughter, and owing to her matchless beauty, her charm of manner and character, and her great talents, swayed her father with a gentle though imperceptible despotism. She enjoyed an establishment of her own, distinct from the royal wives, who were of comparative insignificance to this royal maiden. She was now in the prime of her youth and had refused offers from almost all the potentates of Asia, to which she had ever leant a deaf ear, being resolved to die a

maid, rather than marry a man she could not love.

When she had seated herself in the summer-house, a little laughing girl darted forward from among the troop of surrounding women, to take charge of her slippers, as she quitted them to extend her small and beautifully shaped feet upon the silken sofa.

"There, there," said the gardener in a whisper, thrusting his elbow against the Prince, "there she is—that is mine," and immediately he perceived the young lady casting her eyes furtively towards the aperture of the closet, by which it was plain the parties concerned had recognized each other. The Prince who was watching every expression of the Princess' face, observed that she smiled as she observed her attendant, and thought he heard her say the words, "Is he there?" which made him conclude, that the intelligence between the gardener's son and her attendant was approved by her.

He then heard her say to her women, with a voice full of music and benevolence, "If the

eunuchs are gone, as the day is hot, you may bathe." Upon which all the women, with tumultuous joy, took their departure, leaving the Princess alone, at which she seemed greatly pleased, for straightway she took a book from under her pillow, preparatory to reading. But when the women were about to disperse, calling by name to her shoe bearer, the young gardener's friend, she said in a low voice, " Stay—you may see him here, I too will speak to him."

Upon which, when the apartment was cleared of the women, the little laughing girl approached the closet and standing beneath, said: " Hassan," (for that was the youth's name) " come down, the Lady Sultaness wishes to see you."

Hassan, upon receiving this order, was perplexed, for as the Prince lay immediately behind him, he could not well extricate himself without causing his companion to get out first; therefore there was a pause and delay.

" Why do you not stir?" said the maiden— " make haste."

"I am coming," said Hassan, but still did not move.

"What has happened? are you lame or afraid?" said the girl.

"Nothing," said Hassan, "but—"

"But what?" said the other, "what have you there behind you?" having perceived the tip of the Prince's cap.

Hassan now became quite anxious, lest he should offend the Princess, and said in a low voice,

"Speak not a word, but I have a friend here, and he must get out first."

"What does Hassan say?" said the Princess, with the voice of a siren, gently taking her eyes from her book; "why does he delay?"

Her attendant, in her turn, was full of anxiety and said he would come in a minute, when suddenly Hezzar Mushkil no longer able to withstand the fascination of the divine being before him, nor longer brook the irksome position in which he lay, emerged from the closet, and stood before her.

The Princess at this unexpected intrusion uttered a faint scream; but almost burst out laughing when she perceived Hassan on his knees before her, with a face full of supplication, saying, "Pity—pity—it is nothing. I only brought him with me to shew him Fatma," which was the name of the laughing girl.

This explanation seemed to appease the benign looking Princess, and she then allowed Hassan to retire and talk with his friend. In the meanwhile Hezzar Mushkil having had time to compose himself, when the Princess asked him who he was, and how he had ventured to risk himself in so much danger, answered in a manner that perfectly astonished her.

She eyed him with attention and new feelings when she observed the dignity of his person, and remarked the choice expression of his language, for although clad in the garb of a labourer, nothing could conceal from a discerning eye that his real position was greatly superior to his appearance.

The Prince, not being prepared to make himself known, little anticipating such a result to his adventurous proceeding, was cautious in his answers.

He felt reluctant in asserting his dignity under the present circumstances, appearing as he did in the garments of a pauper, and the associate of a menial.

"Who are you?" said the Princess in accents inspiring confidence, "If you be in distress you will be relieved."

"I am an unfortunate man," said Hezzar Mushkil, "what more can I say? Destiny, which one day works for evil, another engenders good, will, perhaps, with the blessing of Allah, restore me to mine own;—in the meanwhile, heaven be praised for its mercies, and particularly for refreshing my eyes with the light which now shines upon them."

"Are you from Ispahan?" said the Princess looking at him with renewed interest.

"Your slave is not of this country, his house is far away; by strange and almost incredible adventures, born heir to everything

that the heart of man can desire, he is now without a friend, and forced, from necessity, to till the ground for his maintenance; still he does not repine, for he has seen that which less favoured mortals yearn in vain to behold."

"You must leave me," said the Princess recovering from her astonishment, and asserting a power over her feelings which she was fast losing, "you are here in danger of being observed, and if seized upon, your life will be forfeited. Let me know how I can help you, and in me you will find a friend."

"Your slave submits to every decree pronounced by your lips," said the Prince scarcely able to suppress the longing desire he had of declaring himself; "his life is at your command. Oh may the day come, when he may speak a more intelligible language, his ambition will then be to awaken other sentiments than those of pity."

"What words are these," said the Princess, alarmed at a declaration for which she was not in the least prepared, and fearful to avow to

herself, how much one so mean in appearance, had excited feelings beyond those of commiseration. "Why not speak plain? Why conceal any thing, when I repeat to you again, that if you are necessitous, you will find relief. My father the King's gate is open to every one; but you must be gone." Further communication was stopped by the distant calls of the eunuchs, warning the women to retire from unpermitted parts of the garden, sounds which so alarmed the Princess, that she peremptorily ordered Hezzar Mushkil and his companion to return to their place of concealment, which they did without delay. But in so doing, calling Hassan to her, she dismissed him with words of small import, whilst in a parenthesis, she added that on the first favourable opportunity he might come again, making no prohibition to prevent him from being accompanied by his present companion.

Hezzar Mushkil retired overwhelmed with feelings entirely new to his nature. Love had taken possession of his heart, and

thoughtlessness was changed into solicitude. He became silent and pensive, and after the departure of the Princess, having extricated himself from his hiding place, he could think and dream of nothing, but of her exquisite charms, and dwell with rapture upon every word she had uttered. Hassan was the only one with whom he could communicate, and with him he did not cease to form plans for seeing her again. But as he contemplated his melancholy position, and the difficulties which, he foresaw, would stand in the way of making himself known, his spirits drooped, and he exhausted himself with hopeless wailing.

At length, it was announced that the Princess would pass the whole day in the garden, and that, owing to a slight indisposition, it was her intention to be attended by only a very few of her ladies.

This piece of information was communicated to Hassan by the young shoe-bearer, and as soon communicated to the Prince, whose whole being became immediately elated with love and hope. But his joy was checked, when

he contemplated the meanness of his attire; and he was determined never again to offend the eyes of one so ardently beloved, by an unworthy exhibition of himself. If by the assistance of better clothes, he could present himself in a manner more corresponding to his rank and birth, he hoped to produce a favourable impression upon her heart, and thus lead her to give credence to his tale.

But where to procure such attire? there was the difficulty—he had no money, nor a friend from whom he could borrow. A thought, however, struck him. He had acquired such entire influence over Hassan, by the superiority of his education, that it occurred to him he might for a short time borrow the clothes of Hassan's father, who in accordance to his situation, was not deficient in elegance of appearance. He soon proposed this, and although the youth was at first struck with apprehension, still Hezzar Mushkil managed to place his request in so plausible a light, that he agreed to further his wishes.

Accordingly on the appointed morning,

Hassan appeared bearing a bundle containing his father's clothes, which Hezzar Mushkil having secreted, he hastened to the hot bath, where he washed and perfumed his person. He then returned, and doffing his rags, clothed himself in the master gardener's best clothes — for such, indeed, they were. When Hezzar Mushkil stepped from behind the thicket, where he had dressed himself, and stood before Hassan, the youth gazed in utter amazement at the change. He saw a being before him of a new order, so entirely did the princely appearance predominate over that of the peasant.

"Mashallah!" exclaimed Hassan, as he almost involuntarily prostrated himself before one, whom he had only a few minutes before looked upon as an equal.

"Let us go," exclaimed the Prince, "there is danger in delay."

"Let us go," said Hassan, following obedient to his call.

They succeeded in secreting themselves in their former place of concealment, before the eunuchs made their appearance, and there

awaited in silence the arrival of the Princess; but they felt anxious for their own safety, when they perceived the head eunuch in person, who having recovered from his illness, seemed to be impelled by renewed energies, prying about with the watchfulness of a lynx, vociferating oaths and maledictions, and promising instant death to whomsoever should be found disobedient to his mandates.

It was evident that the illness of the Princess was merely a pretext to be left alone, for she beamed with charms and fascination. Having taken her seat in the summer-house, she dismissed her attendants, with the exception of Hassan's friend, who soon was sent to invite him to appear.

The Prince was not long in appearing also, and when with hesitating steps, he approached the object of his adoration, he became alarmed when he perceived the state of trepidation, into which she was thrown by his appearance But love, ever expert at making intercession for faults, soon interfered in favour of the Prince, and allowed the words he ventured to utter to be received with favour.

The Princess, at the first glance discovered the former gardener in the well dressed man who now stood before her, and the various conjectures which she had made, as to who that gardener could really be, during the time she had passed since they last met, were now, she felt, about being cleared up. Deep blushes overspread her face, and she trembled from head to foot, when Hezzar Mushkil knelt before her, and kissed the hem of her garment, and still more was she agitated, when, with a voice full of the deepest emotion, and with a face beaming with love, tempered by respect, he said:

"Your humble servant has once more ventured to appear before you. He kisses the print of your slipper: its very dust is collyrium to his eyes. Forgive this piece of assurance, one single moment of your displeasure will be his death; he comes impelled by his heart, and your condescension;—be mindful of him, for he only lives in your smiles."

Every word was heard by the Princess with wonder and astonishment, and although she had been struck by his language, when in

the garb of a peasant, yet never could she have conceived that he was in every way so infinitely superior, as he proved himself, to the courtiers or dignitaries of her father's court. So charmed was she, that instinctively she treated him as an equal. With an assumed coldness of manner, she merely confined herself to ask him who he was.

"I will no longer conceal," he said, "who the miserable man is who stands before you—I have no one here to answer for the truth of my words, and should I find no sympathy in your breast for my misfortunes, then I have no other refuge but despair."

"Speak on!" said the Princess with impatience in her accent.

"This less than the least," said the Prince "is heir to the throne of Bukhara; he feels that he is not unworthy of throwing himself at your feet, for his father is a King, and he counts kings for his ancestors. Thrown by a series of wonderful adventures into the miserable state in which you see him, he has now but one hope left, which is, that through your favour he may receive permission

to leave Persia, and return to his own country." He then related the whole of his story, without omitting any circumstance which could give it credibility.

The Princess's heart beat with joy and exultation at hearing this declaration, for the sentiments, which in spite of her better reason, she had felt for this stranger, were at once vindicated. Without waiting to ascertain the truth of his assertions, she allowed herself to give way to her feelings, and was not slow in manifesting how much she was charmed with the Prince's appearance and conversation, for she now had met with one who realized her conceptions of excellence; and his station in life being equal to her own, she deemed it no crime to cherish and encourage the impression he had produced.

"Stranger as you are to me," she said, "I am willing to believe what you assert, for your conduct answers for your noble birth. All-powerful destiny has brought us together, and should that same power be still propitious, let us hope that it may lead us on to future happiness."

"Adorable Princess!" exclaimed Hezzar Mushkil in the excess of his joy, "how can your slave ever repay this great condescension? May the day come, when, after having seen the King, my father, and returning to Persia, I may be allowed to claim, in my own person, a continuation of the privilege of approaching and adoring you. I can contemplate no greater recompense for all the miseries I have undergone—the hunger and thirst in the desert—the tyranny and violence which I underwent in Herat—the degradation I have endured in the royal gardens—no privation can ever be put into competition with the one privilege of being allowed to gaze on those unrivalled charms."

"You overrate my poor merits," answered the daughter of the King of Persia; "we are such as it hath pleased Allah to make us; but we confess that never have we met with so great a proof of the good providence of Allah, as having thrown us in your path, poor and miserable though you be, and surrounded by luxuries and royal state though we are."

With this and such like discourse did the lovers entertain each other, forgetful of time and situation; and there we must leave them for the present to relate some particulars which are likely to disturb their felicity.

The master gardener, on the morning when the circumstances we have just described took place, was suddenly called upon to wait upon the chief eunuch, who having been confined by illness, now appeared for the first time since his confinement, in the full vigour of an untoward and captious temper. He found everything wrong in the royal gardens — the walks ill swept — the fountains deficient in water—frogs croaking in the marble basins — he even complained that the flowers did not blow as he could wish, nor did the nightingales sing in their accustomed bowers.

In this ill-humour he sent for the master gardener, who wishing to show him all honour, immediately called for his best clothes, wherewith to appear before this abitrator of his destiny.

"Where are my clothes?" he inquired in haste of his wife.

"What do I know?" she answered; "they were here but this morning, enclosed in the cotton wrapper."

The master gardener searched in vain, and then exclaimed to his wife, "Oh little woman! are you mad to allow my garments to be stolen?"

"What means this?" she said, at the same time calling to her servant maid to explain the deficiency. "Has any one been here this morning?"

"No one but Hassan," said the maid; "perhaps he took them, for he carried a bundle under his arm."

Great search was immediately instituted for Hassan, but no where was he to be found, until a labourer asserted he had seen him proceeding towards the royal gardens accompanied by his friend Hezzar Mushkil.

In this dilemma, the master gardener was obliged to appear in his working dress, dirty and begrimed, before the dreaded chief of the eunuchs.

"Oh man!" exclaimed that ill-conditioned person, "are we a dog that you should keep me

waiting thus? why do you not appear—and when you do appear, why come ye as if you were visiting a dunghill?—I am a personage after all—I am an officer of the King—shall I be made to swallow abomination after this fashion?"

"As I am your sacrifice," said the master gardener with great humility, "the reason of your slave's delay, is that his ill-luck has deprived him of the proper robe of decency wherewith to clothe himself in order to appear before your excellency. That ill-fated son of your humble slave, Hassan, has born it away, whither Allah only knows, and in company of that stranger youth from Bukhara, is departed and nowhere to be found."

"Ah is it so?" said the suspicious head of the women; "whither is he gone?"

"They were seen walking towards the royal gardens," answered the master gardener, little suspecting the dilemma in which he was about to involve his son.

"Here, children!" exclaimed the chief eunuch to his attendants, with a voice portentous of every evil passion. "Go straightway to the

gardens—search every nook and corner, go even to the very spot where the Lady Sultaness is seated, return and tell me whether any of the imps of Satan in the shape of man be there or not—or stay," said he, his suspicions getting the better of his patience, "I will go myself, and should I see the tip of a whisker within a league of the place, I will make every ill-conditioned soul jump out of each unsainted body."

Upon which gathering up the skirts of his robe, and clothing his face with exaggerated sourness, he sallied forth followed by his myrmidons.

He said nothing, but true it is that a torrent of thoughts, portending violence, passed rapidly through his head into his heart. On entering the garden, he marshalled his men throughout the shrubberies, as a head sportsman might station his under-keepers; but no trace of man was found. The few women who had attended the Lady Sultaness, were disposed of in a distant part of the enclosure, and nobody was there to intercept the arrival of the violent man, before he reached the

very spot, were the King of Persia's daughter and the Prince, were in close conversation. The chief eunuch no sooner caught sight of them, than he raised a cry, which can only be compared to the screach of a wild beast. His livid face broke out into a scarlet hue, his eyes became wild with animation, and his skinny hands grasping his dagger, he continued to vociferate until he found himself surrounded by his attendants, when rushing forwards, he darted upon the lovers like a famished tiger seeking his prey.

Upon hearing the awful sound of the chief eunuch's voice, the Lady Sultaness and the Prince started with dismay, and when they perceived him followed by his attendants advancing with hostile intentions, Hezzar Mushkil stood on his feet, and interposed himself as a screen before the Princess. Hassan too, who was at a small distance, rushed forwards, and these movements had the effect of averting that instant death, which otherwise would have been the Prince's fate.

Before many minutes had expired, they were both so effectually overpowered by superior

numbers, that their destiny seemed inevitable, and notwithstanding the cries of the Princess, they were forcibly bound and conducted away to await the commands of the King. The chief eunuch, celebrated as the most faithful executioner of his royal master's orders, would listen to no explanation which the Princess could make. A compromise of such matters was unknown at the Persian court; all parties were aware that death was the inevitable consequence of clandestine intercourse, and although in most other cases, the Princess reigned supreme, yet in whatever regarded the violation of the harem, she was totally helpless. With this conviction, her situation was deplorable. She determined to make one desperate effort to save her lover, and insisted upon immediately seeing the King her father; but certain etiquettes impeding her wishes, the unfortunate Hezzar Mushkil with his companion were ordered for execution on that very evening.

It was soon known throughout the city, that the King's wrath had been excited, and various were the reports circulated. Some said that

the Princess had been insulted by the chief gardener's son, and that both were about to be executed. Others, that a labouring man had run mad, styled himself Prince, and had made an attempt to carry off the Princess. Those nearer the mark, affirmed that the chief eunuch had discovered a man in the royal gardens with the Princess, who asserted that he was the Prince of Bukhara in order to save himself from instant death; but that he had been seized, and was about to forfeit his life for the offence. In the mean while, Hezzar Mushkil did everything that lay in his power, to extricate himself from the miserable position in which he was placed. He insisted upon being taken before the Shah, and loudly asserted that he was the only son of the King of Bukhara, and heir to his throne.

But what could he do against his many enemies; appearing as he did, in the triple character of thief, impostor and committer of sacrilege? The master gardener swore that he had stolen his clothes, all the labouring gardeners affirmed that he had never uttered

a word relating to his regal pretensions, and the chief eunuch had detected him in the very act of invading the privacy of the royal harem. He was, therefore, denied the privilege of seeing the King, and nothing appeared to be left to him but the ignominious death to which he was condemned.

It is possible, had the Sultaness been allowed immediate access to her father, that the urgency of her explanations, impelled by the warmth of her feelings, might have averted the impending calamity; but state etiquette intervened—the King was at that moment under the hands of the court physician; the astrologers too, had been at work; the Princess could not possibly see him, therefore, the Prince was hopelessly fated to loose his life.

All crimes committed against the sanctity of the harem, are capital in a Mahommedan country, consequently the unfortunate Hezzar Mushkil was condemned to undergo a public execution. Hassan, in consideration of his youth, (for it was a disputed question among the lawyers, whether he was a man or boy),

was simply bastinadoed on the soles of his feet, but he was ordered to be present at the beheading of his companion, in order that he might learn a salutary lesson for the future.

The apparatus of death was exhibited before the principal gate of the palace, called Allah Capi; the great square was filled with the gaping multitude, guards were posted in a circle to keep the place of execution clear, and the executioner stood in the midst with drawn sword and his arm bare, waiting the arrival of his victim.

Hezzar Mushkil, seeing that all hopes were fled, and that no possibility was left of escape, had made up his mind to die in a manner worthy of a Prince, and the descendant of a Hemezen. All that he demanded was the permission to indite two letters, which having been granted, he wrote one to his father, acknowledging his great imprudence at having allowed himself to be led away in pursuit of the rebels; that all his misfortunes had been the produce of that event. He prayed his father's forgiveness, and craved his blessing, whilst he

entreated him not to allow his blood to remain unavenged.

The second letter was to the Princess, in which he put forth sentiments worthy of his birth, and avowed the most unbounded love for her; he entreated her to discard every thought implying her negligence of his safety, and implored her to honour his memory by an occasional sigh of regret.

His mind being relieved by these acts, he boldly marched forward with a steady pace and firm countenance to the place of his doom, amidst the scoffs and jeers of the royal household, but accompanied by the sympathy of the assembled women, who could not see so handsome a man go to execution, without evincing the expression of their tenderness.

If this were the whole misery that awaited him, all had been well, but the malignant chief of the eunuchs, who in the struggle of seizing the Prince, had been called 'no beard,' had determined upon inflicting something more than mere loss of head, and, consequently, had prepared a mangy ass, upon which he ordered

the Prince to mount, with his face to the tail, and the tail in his hand; whilst a crier proceeded in advance, exclaiming: "This is he who calls himself Prince of Bukhara, it is lawful to spit in his face."

When Hezzar Mushkil was made acquainted with the proposed indignity, he stood like a lion at bay, and positively refused to obey; insolence and violence were showered upon him—he was beaten, spit upon, and would have been torn to pieces, had he not been seized and by force mounted upon the ass; but such was his strength, and his resistance so effectual, that the indignity in contemplation was about to be abandoned, when of a sudden, a great sensation was produced by the appearance of a cavalcade of way-worn travellers, dressed in a foreign garb, who were making their way to the gate of the royal palace.

The prisoner and the executioner were left unheeded, whilst every eye was turned towards the travellers.

"Who and what are they? whence do they come? what do they here?" were questions

bandied about, and which no one could answer.

The cavalcade consisted of about a dozen persons, the chief of whom was a stately looking man, with a Tartar face, and dressed in a costume which denoted that he came from the east. But there was one among them, it was difficult at first to ascertain whether man or woman, who, upon close investigation, proved to be a woman, and one, the oldest of her kind. Her face was withered with the wrinkles of care; she wore an iron helmet, a bow and arrows were slung about her person, and she bestrode her horse with the ease of an old warrior. She took little heed of the curiosity which her appearance created, but kept casting her eyes about in every direction, as if seeking some dearly beloved object. Suddenly, upon approaching the royal gate, they fell upon the erect and commanding person of Hezzar Mushkil; when, at the same moment, his eyes catching a glimpse of her, they each uttered a loud and piercing cry.

He extended his hands towards her, whilst

she, clapping her stirrups to her horse's sides, dashed forward, and in spite of every impediment, succeeded in gaining the spot where he stood, when throwing herself from off her horse, she—the old Hemezen, the Dedeh—enjoyed the entrancing pleasure of clasping in her arms her long lost Hezzar Mushkil.

"And have I found you at last! light of my eyes!" exclaimed the agitated old woman, —"where have you been?—and what are you standing here for?"

"I am waiting to have my head cut off," said Hezzar Mushkil with great composure. "These tyrants won't believe that I am the King of Bukhara's son."

"Not believe!" exclaimed the old Hemezen, "they eat dirt for their pains—you are not only the King of Bukhara's son, but his only son;—what words are these?"

The malignant chief of the eunuchs, observing this pause, and that his orders were not obeyed, was about to issue his commands to continue the ceremonial, when a herald was seen to issue from the palace, bearing orders from the grand-vizier that all further

proceeding should stop, until a proper reception had been given to the ambassadors just arrived from the King of Bukhara, of whose approach he had just been informed, and who, were he curious in executions, might have the honour conferred upon him of being entertained by the sight of one.

To the astonishment of all, the ambassador himself, as soon as he perceived Hezzar Mushkil, straightway fell at his feet.

"How is this!" exclaimed the King of Persia's officers; "he is a Prince after all."

"This is child's play," vociferated the chief of the eunuchs, "are our beards to be laughed at in this manner? why do we not slay the man who defiled the royal harem?"

His words, however, were not heeded; but Hezzar Mushkil was straightway clothed with a suitable dress and conducted to the grand-vizier, escorted by the ambassador and the old Hemezen.

The vizier was a wise man, and although he was convinced, by the appearance of Hezzar Mushkil, that he could not be a gardener's

workman, still he was afraid of declaring him to be the dignitary he pretended, upon the declaration of strangers—for such were the ambassador from the King of Bukhara and his companions. When they were seated he thus spoke,

" I am not a man to disbelieve what so many circumstances tell me to be true — that in this young man now before me I see the son of the King of Bukhara ;—but a vizier, who is the eyes, and ears, and head of the state must be cautious, and he cannot fortify himself with too many proofs before he makes assertions in the face of his royal master, the King. What proof, oh ambassador ! have you, beyond your own word, that this youth is really the Prince Hezzar Mushkil ?"

The ambassador, at this question was overtaken with confusion, for in truth beyond the credentials of which he was the bearer and which only proved his own identity, he could give no proof than his word. But the Dedeh who was quite alive to all the proceedings, the moment she heard the question of the grand-vizier, exclaimed :

" Proof do you want, I'll give you proof; if he has not the mark of a bow and arrow stamped on his breast, which I say he has, then he is not the son of the King of Bukhara. Light of my eyes," she exclaimed to the Prince, " open your vest and shew yourself to be what we proclaim you to be."

Upon this Hezzar Mushkil opened his vest and there, true enough, was seen the stamp of the bow and arrows on his breast, and at the sight of which, every one present, from the grand-vizier to the lowest attendant, exclaimed, " Mashallah! Praise be to Allah! Ajaib! Wonderful!" and such like words of astonishment.

As soon as the King of Persia was informed that the culprit, was in truth the son of the King of Bukhara, his conduct towards him underwent a total change. He overlooked the invasion he had made of the sacred precincts of the harem, and did every thing in his power to confer upon him all the honours and distinctions due to his rank. He was straightway taken to the royal hot bath; his body was washed, perfumed and dressed in the

richest robes from the royal wardrobe, the ensigns of royalty were conferred upon him; bracelets were placed on his arms, a diamond hilted dagger was inserted in his girdle and a tassel of pearls was suspended therefrom. He was then conducted to a magnificent apartment within the royal palace, and there lodged together with the ambassador and his beloved Dedeh. Being seated in his hall of audience on a musnud, he was visited by the grand-vizier and complimented by him in the name of the King, and an hour appointed when he should make his first visit. All the dignitaries of state, in their turns, paid him visits of compliment by command of the King, and even the chief eunuch, who had been so forward in evincing his enmity, now appeared one of the first to make speeches of congratulation.

All this while, the Prince's heart was totally and entirely absorbed by his passion for the enchanting Princess of Persia. Much as he was charmed by his reprieve from death, and by seeing his Dedeh and hearing news from his beloved father, still every joy was absorbed in the hope of again seeing his adorable

Princess, and ultimately obtaining possession of her hand in marriage. He could think and dream of nothing else, and calling Hassan to him, who, from experience, he knew could obtain access to the Princess through the means of her shoe-bearer, he delivered to him a letter, which he charged him forthwith to have conveyed into her own hands.

In this letter, he drew a glowing picture of his passion, and dwelt with rapture upon his hopes, laying himself and a kingdom at her feet, now that destiny had evidently turned over a new page in the book of fate, favourable to his wishes.

The Princess had been dissolved in tears ever since the catastrophe in the garden. She was informed of the fate awaiting her lover, and despair had taken possession of her heart. She accused herself of being the cause of his death, and bewailed, with wringing of hands and loud lamentations, the fatal imprudence which had induced her to see him against all the received decorum of Persian manners, and in direct opposition to those express commands so frequently issued by her

royal father. She was waiting, with intense apprehension, the news of his death, although she had set every engine to work to prevent it, and she was just vowing, in her inmost thoughts, not to survive him, when her principal confidant rushed in with breathless joy to inform her of the event of the ambassador's arrival and of the Prince's reprieve.

The shock produced, on her too sensitive heart, by this unexpected announcement, was too much to bear, and she fainted away through excess of joy. When restored to life, she could not sufficiently enjoy the repetition of the happy news, and did not cease requiring every particular to be narrated, particularly that which related to the establishment of the proof that he was indeed the heir to the kingdom of Bukhara. A lively hope then sprung up in her heart, that she might be united to him in marriage, for here she had found one, in every respect worthy to be her husband, and to whom her father could in no wise object, for the kingdom of Bukhara was almost as great in extent as that of Persia. This hope was confirmed into certainty as soon as she

read the letter from Hezzar Mushkil, which was duly delivered to her by her shoe-bearer. She received it with enthusiastic joy, kissed it a thousand times and read it over so often, that she could repeat every word by heart. Instead of wailing and lamentation, nothing but joy now breathed throughout the harem, and spies were sent out to watch and report what was taking place at court among the men, for the smallest incident was now of importance to the Princess, inasmuch as every event was more or less connected with the well-being of her beloved Prince.

The Shah gave the Prince of Bukhara, attended by his ambassador and suite, a most brilliant and solemn reception. He clothed himself in his most gorgeous robes, adorned his person with all the state jewels, and sat upon his golden throne to receive him. All the great lords and dignitaries of the state were present, and nothing was wanting to make the ceremonial worthy of the national reputation for riches and urbanity. The Prince was admitted to sit upon the very same musnud as the King, and the court poet celebrated the

event by writing a poem of fifty thousand stanzas in length, so that nothing should be wanting to render it a feature of history. As soon as the public audience was over, the Prince demanded a private one of his Majesty, which was granted; and there he set forth in the most glowing and respectful language, how much his heart was inflamed with love for his daughter, and demanded, in express terms, her hand in marriage. The Shah, a monarch full of sagacity, having been made acquainted with the strange and fabulous circumstances which had brought his daughter and the Prince together, concluded that such a romance could not be conducted without the outbreak of love, at once answered that he lived only to make his daughter happy, and that if she were agreeable to the request, he could interpose no objection. At these words, the entranced Hezzar Mushkil fell at his feet with joy and thankfulness, and said that he would await her decision with hope, and abide by it with the profoundest respect.

That decision was not long withheld, and no two mortals ever so effectually seated them-

selves upon the carpet of happiness, as did the Prince of Bukhara and the Princess of Persia. Hezzar Mushkil was not long in returning to his own country, to seek his father's blessing and consent, which having been obtained, his nuptials were celebrated in a manner so sumptuous, that the court poet passed the remainder of his life in writing a poem upon the subject, which, however, he did not finish, although he died one of the oldest men in Persia. The old Hemezen, lived long enough to ascertain that the dynasty of Bukhara would not be extinct in the person of her beloved Hezzar Mushkil, and, at length, died cheered by the thought that she had been the cause of doing some good in the world. The Prince having become King, reigned long over a people who blessed him and his Queen, as contributors to their happiness by the exercise of their many virtues.

When the Mirza had finished his narrative of the adventures of the Prince Hezzar Mushkil, he assured me that it was wholly and entirely an impromptu. "The Shah, *ilham-*

dillah! praise be to Allah," said he, "was pleased, and to say the truth, I flattered myself that I had not done amiss. The best proof of this was that I kept his Majesty awake, and that he only called for his kalian twice during the whole narrative. His Majesty who possesses an hundred sons at least, was wonderfully amused by the account of the unfortunate king who had only one, and every now and then exclaimed, "*bad bakht!* unfortunate! had he sent to me instead of to the Hemezens, I could have sold him several cheap."

"But," said I to my friend, "you have been talking of Hemezens, as if such people really existed. We too in our books possess stories of a nation entirely composed of women, and who are there called Amazons, now as your word Hemezen signifies 'all women,' and leads to the supposition that our Amazon may be derived from it, I beg of you to inform me what may be the extent of your information upon the subject."

"My knowledge," answered the Mirza, "is solely derived from a report and a prevalent

belief, that a nation entirely composed of women was once known to inhabit a remote region of the Caucasus, near Cakhet. I do not myself see how such a nation could exist; for whatever is exclusive degenerates. If relations intermarry, they dwindle into dwarfs; what, then, could a set of women do without husbands? it is a known fact that among the Tartars their women are as much on horseback as the men; therefore the idea of a nation composed of women might, perhaps, originate in that circumstance."

I quite agreed with my friend in his conjecture, and most true it is that an opinion prevails in the East, and has prevailed for centuries, that a nation of Amazons exists in Asia. This is confirmed by what that quaint and most credulous of travellers, Sir John Mandeville, says on the subject. He writes in the year 1332, and his words are as follows:

"Besydè the land of Caldee is the land of Amazoyne; and in that relme is alle women, and no man; noght, as some men seyn, that men mowe not lyve there, but for because that the women will not suffre no men amonges

hem, to ben here sovereynes. For sum tyme ther was a Kyng in thet contrey, and men maryed as in other contreyes; and so befelle, that the Kyng had werre, with hem of Sithie; the whiche Kyng, highte Colopeus that was slayne in bataylle and alle the gode blood of his relme. And when the Queen and alle the othere noble ladyes sawen that thei weren all wydewes, and that all the realle blood was lost, thei armed hem, and as creatures out of wytt, thei slower all the men of the contrey that weren left. For thei wolde that alle the women weren wydewes as the Queen and thei weren; and fro that tyme hiderwardes thei never wolden suffren man to dwelle amonges hem, longer than seven days and seven nyghtes, ne that no child that were male sholde dwelle amonges hem, longer than he were noryscht; and thanne sente to his fader. And when thei wil have ony companye of man, than thei drawen hem towardes the landes marchynge next to he; and than thei have loves that usen hem, and thei dwellen with hem an eight days or ten, and then gon home agen. And zif thei have ony knave child, thei kepen it a

certeyn tyme, and then senden it to the fader, when he can gon allone, and eten be himself, or else thei sleen it; and zif it be a femele, thei don away that on pappe with an hot hiren, and zif it be a womman of gret lynage, thei don away the left pappe, that thei may the better beren a scheeld, and zif it be a womman of symple blood, they don away the rygt pappe, for to saheten with bowe turkeys, for thei schote well with bowes. In that lande they have a Queen that governethe alle that land, and alle thei ben obeyssant to hire; and always thei maken here Queen by eleccioun, that is most worthy in armes. For thei ben right gode werryoures and wyse, noble, and worthi; and thei gon often tyme in sowd* in help of other Kynges, in her werres for gold and sylver, as othere sowdyoures don, and thei meyntenen himself right vygouresly."

I communicated my information to the Mirza, who did not seem surprized at any part of Sir John's narrative, but rather contended

* *Sowd*, hire, *soudoyer*, to keep in pay; *sowdyour*, hence soldier.

that he had confined himself within the bounds of mere facts, and that many more extraordinary things might be said. I assured my companion, that as far as the marvellous was concerned, the ancient knight had sufficiently satisfied my curiosity, and we parted with mutual protestations of regard and with eager hopes of soon again enjoying the pleasure of a meeting.

VISIT III.

It was not until the close of autumn, when the first chills from the snowy summits of Alborj begin to make themselves felt at Tehran, and a *pústeen*, or sheepskin cloak may occasionally be seen in the bazaar, that I again had communication with my friend the prince of poets.

The Shah had resumed his winter quarters, having returned from his campaign on the plains of Sultanieh and Ojan, and dismissed his troops to their homes until he again should call for their services in the spring; whilst the court and the city seemed to abandon every care, save that of securing warmth, comfort and sociability during the rigour of the approaching season. The ambassador

having paid his formal visit of ceremony and congratulation to the Shah, during my attendance on the occasion, I met and conversed, for a few minutes, with the Mirza, who promised that we should soon again meet, and hinted that he had devised a mode of increasing the pleasure of our meetings, which he would explain more fully by and by.

Accordingly a few days after, I received a visit from him, and he then informed me that a particular friend of his who had been absent some time from court was just returned. He described him as a man of excellent sense, of much ingenuity, fond of literature, and possessed of such powers of conversation, that he held the important post of King's *Mosahib*, or companion, or maker of conversation, and was appointed upon the great daily Selam or court, to answer whatever observations his Majesty might be pleased to make.

This personage was a native of the city of Merv, of which he was the Prince, and was in every way a nobleman both by birth and dignity of conduct and demeanour. He was fond of the society of learned and literary men, and my

friend informed me, it was his wish that we should occasionally meet at his house, and pass our time in conversation and in relating stories.

To this effect he named a day for our first meeting, and in order that refreshments might not be wanting, the Prince of Merv, for so I will call him, proposed to give us tea to drink made after the manner of the Tartars, who receive it direct from China and freely indulge in its use. In short, we were to have a Tartar tea party in all due form, and I need not say that I was happy to obtain a fresh glimpse of the society and habits of people in every way so interesting.

At the appointed hour on the appointed day, the servant of my friend, the Mirza, came to inform me that all was ready and invited me to the entertainment. I followed him, and alighted at one of the handsomest entrances in Tehran, a gateway arched and painted, duly swept and sprinkled with water, when having been paraded through several large courts laid out into flower beds, straight walks and fountains—I was introduced into a smaller

court, where I found the room in which the Prince received his friends in private. This was already filled with guests. He half rose from his seat as I entered, and pointing to a place near him, I nestled myself between my friend, the Mirza, and a man whom I did not know, a Tartar by his face, with my back against the wall, and my legs well doubled up under me.

Our host was a singularly handsome man, possessing an intelligent eye, an aquiline nose, and a magnificent beard which reaching his girdle, vied with that of the Shah, his royal master, in all the perfection of length, breadth, gloss and fulness. His manners were those of a finished gentleman, and he would have been called such either at the court of Versailles, or at that of St. James's, for I found him easy of access—civil without stiffness, and full of those engaging attentions which tend to place a stranger at his ease.

The assembly, besides the Mirza and myself, consisted of some six or seven persons, some men in office about the person of the Shah, and others the Prince's own countrymen, all

well bred men who had seen the world. Our host was very happy in his mode of making us welcome, and as I was the only one who was really a stranger, being an European and a Christian, and not a Mahommedan like the rest, he seemed particularly anxious that I should feel quite at my ease, and directed much of his discourse to me. He first alluded to the use of tea, which he assured me in his own city and country, was habitually drank. He then pointed out the Tartar mode of making it, and exhibited the apparatus which stood without the door of the room, consisting of a sort of kettle mounted on a stand, which being heated by charcoal underneath boiled the tea mixed with milk and sweetened with sugar, and was then served to us in basins. He appeared to esteem tea principally as a sudorific, and rejoiced as we each drank off our bowl, packed close as we all were, that we should soon feel its wholesome effects. This we did, and the whole company were not long in looking very hot under their beards. But my Mirza turning from the subject of tea, soon called our attention to the object of

our meeting, stating how much I enjoyed oriental fiction, and then remarked that the Prince himself being a depository of a great variety of tales, more particularly relating to his part of Asia, we all hoped that he would indulge us in relating one for this evening's amusement.

"How," said the Prince, "Astafarallah! heaven forbid—what? is your slave to speak, when the father and grandfather of all story tellers is present, the Shah's own poet laureat the prince of verse?—no, that must not be."

Such a compliment to my friend, was speedily returned by another, and thus much time was lost in preliminaries, when at length our host acceding to the general wish, and being, indeed, celebrated for his invention and his easy flow of language, clearing his voice and placing himself in a talking attitude, began as follows:—

STORY OF AZBEAZ THE SHOE-MAKER KING.

THERE was once a small kingdom in the very distant parts of Tartary bordering upon China, of which, perhaps, few traces would be found at this present day, its capital city being situated in a plain surrounded by arid mountains. It was governed by a very tyrannical King, an usurper of the throne, who, upon the most trivial occasions, made it his pleasure to exercise great acts of severity in ruling over his subjects, and although he was in consequence much execrated, yet also he was much feared. Many stories are related concerning this King, his capital city, and the surrounding country and mountains, all tending to prove that they were subject to certain agencies, which not being accounted for by natural causes, were looked upon as supernatural, and, therefore, the inhabitants lived in a state of mind always ready to receive and believe any tales, however marvellous.

In the city lived two brothers, men in the middle ranks of life, one of whom was the cause of a great convulsion in the kingdom. The eldest as he grew up was commonly called Sakalchok, or Muchbeard, and the second Azbeaz, or 'little and white,' both designations being derived from their respective beards, for that characteristic of the face being usually scanty in Tartary, men were subject to many remarks whenever there was a variety.

The elder brother being gifted with much beard, and such a gift being greatly prized, became very arrogant, gave himself great airs, despised others, and was particularly hard upon his younger brother, who having but a small quantity of that appendage, and that so white as to be scarcely perceptible, was looked down upon.

The elder brother enjoyed a higher walk of life than the younger, a circumstance which greatly excited his pride, for he was a jeweller and goldsmith, whilst the other was only a shoemaker. In person too they were so different, that it was difficult to make people believe them to be brothers. Sakalchok was a tall well

grown man, with a commanding face, and one who walked, talked, sat, and conducted himself with the airs of a man of importance, whilst Azbeaz was peculiary ill-favoured and deficient in beauty. His principal deformity consisted in the singular distribution of the features of his face; his mouth was kept constantly open by the projection of his upper teeth, which were so disposed, that whatever might be the mood of his mind, he always appeared to be laughing, and his eyes being sharp, their lively expression confirmed the beholder in the supposition that he was always indulging in that exercise. This peculiarity had been the means of procuring him many advantages in life, as well as many of its miseries, for by this laughing face, the emblem of good humour, he acquired a corresponding reputation, whilst it also involved him in many a scrape, being frequently accused of laughing out of season. In addition, he was deformed by a curvature of spine, short crooked legs, and an enormous circumference of hips. Thus equipped, Azbeaz apparently started in life with much greater disadvantages than his

brother, but the excellence of his temper and disposition rendered him, in truth, a happier man—he was humble, always ready to oblige, and prone to generosity, whilst Sakalchok lived in the persuasion that all mankind, and his brother in particular were bound to acknowledge his superiority and to bend to his decisions.

Sakalchok occupied one of the most respectable jeweller's shops in the goldsmith's bazaar, where he kept several apprentices at work; whilst his dwelling-house, which was full of luxury within, although it presented but a mean appearance without, was situated in a handsome quarter of the city.

Azbeaz's shop stood at the meeting of four streets in the great bazaar, called Chahar Sou, and there he worked alone at his trade with his own hands, for his dignity among shoemakers was scarcely above that of cobbler, whilst his dwelling-house lay in the outskirts of the town, and consisted of a few mud built rooms enclosed within a sorry wall which encircled a small court-yard. Azbeaz, was in truth, a merry fellow at heart, although

he had much to complain of in the conduct of his brother, who although he took no notice of him in the world, was glad to get his shoes made by one whom he never deigned to pay.

The progress of the elder brother through life had been one of unchecked prosperity—from small beginnings he gradually had enriched himself, having made capital hits in the purchase of precious stones—was celebrated for his taste in setting them, and could design and chase flowers on gold and silver in a manner unrivalled by other artists; so great was his fame, that he was now bidding fair to become the court jeweller.

Azbeaz, on the contrary, had endured many vicissitudes, which had been the means of forming his character into that habitual resignation prescribed by his law—many of his mishaps had arisen from the cast of his face, for even during his boyhood he had received many an unmerited beating for supposed laughter.

His father who was a tanner, insisted upon his becoming a shoemaker in order that he

might thus create a purchaser for his leather, although Azbeaz himself had a turn for letters and longed to be a mollah.

He had once been nearly put to death for being supposed to laugh when the people had received orders to mourn for the King's death, and at a funeral ceremony where he had been invited to do honour to the dead by a sad countenance, his obstinate muscles were so obnoxious, that he was turned out of the house as a pestilent fellow. His reputation for good nature was the cause of much misfortune, for his creditors were always backward in their payments, whilst those to whom he was a debtor had no compunction in urging their demands. In short, he scarcely ever passed a day without feeling the inconvenience of his face and disposition.

His brother had long been married, a state to which Azbeaz also aspired, but without success. Although his back was crooked, yet nature had endowed him with a tender heart, and, moreover, with a great admiration for beauty. By chance, he once had the satisfaction to obtain sight of the face of a neighbour's

niece, a most beautiful maiden of sixteen, and from that moment he determined to leave no stone unturned until he obtained possession of her hand.

Without apprehension concerning his own looks, he immediately assumed all the airs of a lover. He endeavoured to coax his grin into a look of despondency, he made verses, and even went the length of cutting and maining his body before the windows of his adored in order to attract her attention. But what he most required, and which he knew would soften the hearts of her relatives was money; with that he hoped to dispel every difficulty, for having discovered that his first overtures were unsucessful, he began to suspect that a crooked spine and an ugly face might prevent the intrusion of love into a maiden's breast, and therefore concluded that, perhaps, it might be softened by the lure of gold and the fascination of finery.

Azbeaz was poor, although had he regularly received the fruits of his industry, he would have been above want. One of his principal debtors was his brother; to him, therefore, he

determined to apply, stating the object of his application, and, moreover, considering the exigency of the case, he hoped, that he might induce him to advance the loan of an additional sum which he would faithfully promise to discharge in shoes.

When he had made known his demand, and the reason thereof, his brother broke out into a taunting laugh, and exclaimed : " Praise be to Allah, the world is turning upside down, Azbeaz is going to be married !"

" And why should he not," said Azbeaz, " is he not a man like the rest of God's creation ? are maidens and wives made for others, and is he not to have one also ?"

" I am not aware he is counted amongst men," answered Sakalchok with renewed contempt. " Has he not a hump ? Has he not the face of a monkey ? Has he not the soul of an inferior animal ? Is he then to be placed among men ?"

" And you are a brother who say all this !" retorted Azbeaz with a mortified and dejected countenance, " we came from the same mother

and were nourished by the same breast, and if so, are you to be counted among men?"

"Man!" exclaimed Sakalchok, "come you here to insult my beard?"

"I am come here," said Azbeaz with more spirit than he was wont to speak to his brother, "I am come here to seek my own—pay me what you owe me—if you refuse to help me in securing my happiness in a wife, I pray you, give me that which you cannot withhold—I am in want of my money and must have it."

"Must! must, indeed!" exclaimed the arrogant Sakalchok, "a miserable cobbler use such a word to the King's jeweller; we shall see where must is! get you gone—say nothing more—get you gone—must, indeed!"

"I demand my money," said Azbeaz with still more spirit, "I am a poor cobbler and you a rich jeweller, still greater is the necessity that you should pay me—let alone the claims of a brother."

"I have no money for such as you," said Sakalchok, "if you have made shoes for me,

great has been the honour conferred upon you."

Azbeaz could not look grave if he wished it, his laughing mouth prevented that, but on this occasion hurt as he was by his brother's conduct, particularly as it checked his love, he gathered himself up into an attitude, which would have been one of dignity had it been adopted by a well-made person, and lifting up his hand said:

"Whatever I am, God made me, and deformity is no fault of mine, and you can no more prevent yourself being my brother than I can being yours—but from this hour, I dissolve the bonds of our relationship, and I treat you as one possessing no tie upon me. If there be justice to be had at the foot of the throne, Azbeaz will seek it."

Upon which he flung himself out of the room, whilst his ears caught the sound of his brother's laugh of contempt, followed up by a shout of defiance.

It was some days after this disappointment, before Azbeaz could hold up his head, but the ardour of his love was so great, that he

could not restrain himself from doing something. Accordingly he got acquainted with an old confidential slave belonging to the family of the maiden he adored; and, in consequence of the questions which he put to her, having learnt some particulars favourable to his passion, he determined to take some steps towards furthering his suit.

The slave informed him that the mother was anxious for her daughter's marriage—that her father being dead, she was under the guardianship of her uncles—that the girl herself was not disinclined to marry, and that she did not know of her being promised to any one. With these facts before him, the enslaved Azbeaz determined to press his suit with the mother; he became acquainted with her, invited her to his shop, softened her heart by presenting her with shoes—offered fruit and sweetmeats, in short, he played his cards so well, that he at length was emboldened to state his pretensions. The mother heard his proposals with delight—for what mother was ever displeased on such an occasion? and recommended him to see the elder uncle, with

a request that he would call a meeting of the family, before whom he would lay his case.

To all this, Azbeaz with joy readily assented. In the meanwhile, the mother instigated her brother-in-law to go to Sakalchok with whom he was well acquainted, to enquire what might be the circumstances of Azbeaz, with a view to furthering the marriage of her daughter.

When Sakalchok received this application, the whole malignity of his humour burst forth; he branded his brother with unjust appellations, laughed aloud at his pretensions as a swain, asserted that he had not ready cash enough to settle even the smallest dower upon a wife, and strongly urged the mother of the maiden and her uncles, of whom she had several, not to give their consent to Azbeaz's proposals. The words of Sakalchok, were words of no mean personage, for he was now the King's principal jeweller and goldsmith, and consequently they were heeded with considerable respect. The uncles avowed themselves disgusted at Azbeaz's impertinence in venturing to make a proposal, and espousing

the opinion expressed by his brother, they determined to give him a piece of their minds on the subject.

Azbeaz waited with impatience for the meeting. At length the morning came and he proceeded to the house of the oldest uncle with a beating heart. The father of the maiden had been the youngest of six brothers and died an oldish man, consequently there were five old men collected to receive Azbeaz. When they were all seated, he opened his case by stating his desire to possess the daughter of his former neighbour as a wife, honestly avowed that he was not rich, but pleaded that he enjoyed the confidence of a good set of customers; and appealed to all those who knew him, whether he was not capable of maintaining a wife in comfort, by the industry of his hands, and the temperance of his habits.

The youngest uncle answered this speech by a sneer; "and so," said he, "you, a poor shoemaker, ugly, with the face of a monkey, with a curved back, without goods and chattels, or property of any kind; you venture to seek our

niece in marriage, she who has beauty enough to wed a khan—a bey—or even a king's jeweller. Are you mad enough to come laughing at our beards in this manner?"

"Mad indeed!" exclaimed the next youngest uncle, "in what part of your understanding did you find that men were such fools, as to be taken in by a deformed cobbler?"

"A deformed cobbler did you say," continued the third uncle, "if that were all, there is no harm done, but what did the king's jeweller, your own brother say? why that you were as insolent as you were ugly, and went about insisting for money as if you were the King."

"Money did you say!" exclaimed the oldest uncle but one, "what money can a cobbler ever make, sufficient to support a comely creature like our niece, who might aspire to marry a vizier's son."

"A vizier's son! what say you?" said the eldest uncle, "is she not fit to be placed in the King's harem? then, wherefore, are we wasting our time in talking to a poor shoemaker, and listening to his insane proposals; let him think himself well off if we do not take him by the

waistband, and throw him into the street for his impertinence."

Azbeaz, during the five speeches with which he had been regaled sat boiling with rage and indignation, although his face was true to its old laugh. When he had heard them out, he slowly arose, and as he walked out of the room, he said, "the day will come, old gentlemen, when you will cry out—*amán—amán.*"

The five old men lifted up their voices and hooted him out of the house, and when they had sufficiently applauded each other for their spirited conduct, dispersed to their respective homes.

Azbeaz dispirited, abashed and enraged, returned to his stall and endeavoured to dispel the gloom of his mind by occupying himself with his work. He determined to make more shoes than ever he had made before, for as the history of his unfortunate love had got abroad, he proposed by assiduity to business, to keep himself out of the way of the scorners and deriders, who would not fail to assail him.

It has been said at the beginning of this history, that the city of which Azbeaz was an

inhabitant, not only was governed by a tyrannical King, but also was subject to certain agencies which not being accounted for by natural means were looked upon as supernatural. The state of the case is as follows : in the centre of the royal palace, a tall and ancient tower reared its head, one side of which was contemplated with pleasure, the other with awe and apprehension. On the side towards the plain, was suspended a large gong, made of a metal so musical and sonorous, that whenever it was struck, the sounds were harmonious. That event took place upon all occasions of joy and festivity; when a prince was born, it was struck; when the royal arms had gained a victory, it resounded far and wide; when the Shah was in good humour, it made itself heard; when good news of any sort were reported, the same was announced by the sounding of this exhilarating instrument, and thus the public joy was decreed and graduated in the most convenient manner. But on the side looking towards the mountains, there existed another larger gong, with one immense knocker suspended over it by an iron chain. This instru-

ment if ever sounded was the certain harbinger of some dreadful public calamity; when a King died it was heard, or when he had put on his bloody red robe, as a signal for cutting off heads, it was heard; and then it was struck by the hand of man, but never in the recollection of the oldest inhabitant had it ever been sounded by the great knocker suspended by the chain. Whenever this happened, according to the current tradition, it was supposed to be done by some supernatural agency, and the sound which the instrument then emitted, was said to be so loud and terrible, that vibrating through the city, making houses shake and men's hearts to quake, it was heard far and wide throughout all the surrounding region and caused a universal tremor and apprehension. The sound alluded to was sure to be followed up by some dire calamity of rebellion, war and bloodshed, was supposed to be directed against the King's safety, and was always expected to occur when his cruelties and extortions became too great for the people to bear. Whenever its ominous sound was heard, there existed a standing order from the

King to all the generals and officers commanding troops throughout the kingdom, immediately to call out their detachments and without delay march to the seat of government. In the city itself, every inhabitant capable of bearing arms, in addition to the troops in garrison were ordered to arm and be in readiness to act. This great gong, in many cases, acted as a salutary check upon the King, and kept his turbulent passions in order, but the actual monarch was beginning to make himself independent of its fears, and it was the fashion among his courtiers and flatterers to laugh at its powers as an old woman's tale, as a bugbear only fit to frighten children. The consequence was, that the King was very cruel and never refrained beating his subjects whenever it so pleased him.

Azbeaz's shop as said before was situated in the *Chahar sou* at the crossing of four streets in the bazaar, immediately opposite to four stepping-stones, placed there for the convenience of foot passengers, when the gutters had overflowed and the water covered the street. The shortest road to the great

mosque whither the King was wont to resort, passed close to Azbeaz's shop leading through the four stepping-stones. Not very long after the occurrence we have related of Azbeaz's visit to the five old men, when he was diligently at work, the King was announced by the heralds, who made way for his passage to the mosque. It so happened that the waters were more than usually out and almost covered the stepping-stones, when apparently to the cobbler's ill-luck, the King's horse in passing them, stumbled, fell and threw his Majesty over his head. This caused a great commotion, every body ran, many were pleased, Azbeaz stood up to see the result, but well for him had it been had he kept aloof, for his face unfortunately met the King's eye, as he arose dripping with mud, when all the royal anger exploded in a manner fearful to behold; and then did the poor shoemaker feel the extent of his misfortune in having been gifted with prominent teeth, which made him laugh whether he would or not.

"*Ahi* ill-born! dog's son!" exclaimed the enraged monarch, "is it thus you laugh at your

King? take him and cut his tongue out," he roared out to his guards; "where are the executioners? here beat that child of Satan, till he has not a foot to stand upon."

The order was no sooner given than executed; the unfortunate Azbeaz was seized, his feet thrown into the air, and before he could, by any means, explain that the fault was not his, that he really did not laugh, that nature had made him laugh whether he would or no, his feet were beaten into one great and cruel wound. The King's wrath being appeased by seeing one in a more deplorable plight than himself, proceeded to pray at the mosque, leaving his victim on the ground scarcely able to crawl and half dead from excess of pain. No one would venture to approach and help him; still in his pain, his obstinate mouth would look as if he were pleased, and thus whilst he repressed pity, he felt more than ever the entire desolation of his fate. Those who knew him; passed by on the other side wagging their heads; those who had enjoyed his jokes, or had partaken of such hospitality as he could

afford, afraid of incurring the King's wrath kept aloof and said nothing.

There was only one, a youth belonging to the King's body-guard, who late in attending his duty, was riding by in haste to join the royal cortege, when he perceived the wretched Azbeaz stretched out on the side of the road writhing with pain. Impelled by no other motive than feelings of pity for the sufferings of a fellow-creature, he straightway dismounted from his horse, and with soothing words, heedless of all consequences, helped him to crawl to his shop, and having procured relief to his mangled feet, he remounted and pursued his course, promising to return again. Such conduct could not fail exciting the approbation of all who witnessed the act, and as he rode off, he heard the consolatory words *barikallah* and *mashallah* frequently repeated, but he did not remark the scowling eye of one dark and malignant man, who with the heart of a demon had marked him down for punishment, and it was not long ere returning to his quarters, that he was seized by the King's orders and

thrown into confinement for having thus publicly brought into contempt the royal ordnance. It need not be said after this, that Azbeaz in vain expected the re-appearance of his benefactor; but in spite of want of assistance, his wounds healed and before many days had elapsed he was again seen at his stall.

As he sat hard at work on his bench, his eye was frequently directed towards the stepping-stone which had been the cause of his late misfortune. It had nearly served him the same trick several times before, for oftentimes when people stumbled over it and observing his extraordinary face near at hand, they invariably laid their mishap to his evil eye. Suddenly, a thought struck him, "never shall that accursed stone be the cause of a similar misfortune again," he said to himself; "if I am what I mean to be, I will not rest until it be removed, and by Allah," he continued musing, "I will remove it myself. Oh, that I could see that noble youth again who came to my assistance, I am sure he would help me."

After much thought, he at length determined

to do the work himself. The bazaars being locked up at night and delivered over to the care of watchmen, who keep watch on the roof, Azbeaz settled in his mind, that instead of leaving his stall at sunset, he would merely appear to shut it as usual, but remain within, when being supplied with a mattock, a spade and a light, he hoped to transpose the obnoxious stone unseen. Accordingly, having procured the necessary implements, at nightfall as usual he closed his stall, but managed unnoticed to remain within.

At the proper time, the bazaars being closed and the watchmen placed, he made preparations to commence his task. A dead stillness reigned throughout the vast building, and Azbeaz although employed in performing a task apparently of no great importance, felt as if he were about to engage in something criminal. He waited until an advanced hour when he knew the watchmen were least likely to be awake, and then fell too with his mattock and spade. The delinquent stone was the most prominent of the four and firmly planted in the ground.

" Allah send thee misfortunes!" said he, as he struck the first blow.

He worked with much ardour until the perspiration fairly burst from his brow, but to his dismay, he found the stone deeply embedded in the ground, and adhering with more pertinacity than he expected. At length, he came to its base, and then he redoubled his activity, for he thought he perceived something more than earth —in fact he observed a shining substance— a few more blows of his mattock brought to light a small iron door with a handle affixed to it. Curiosity now impelled him, but ere he ventured to lift up the door, he suddenly arrested himself with this question—should it be a treasure what am I to do?—Shall I fly or proceed?—He could check himself no longer, but at once opening the door, which creaked from rust, instead of a golden treasure, he merely discovered a large key. Having taken it into his hand, by the light of the lantern he discerned written characters upon it, which with much difficulty he decyphered (for Azbaez was a good scholar) and found them to say, 'Follow me.'

"How is this?" said he, "follow a key—what can it mean?"

Hoding it in his hand, to his surprize he felt it communicate a pressing forward movement to him, as if some one were inviting him to proceed in a particular direction. He placed it on the ground, as a thing that might be alive; but there it lay inert—taking it up again, the same impelling motion was felt, and he remained utterly astonished. He kept repeating to himself the words 'follow me,' until he was weary of conjecture. At length, he bethought himself of proceeding a few steps in the direction to which it pressed forward, and true enough as he walked the pressure increased. His surprize was now overwhelming.

"Allah! what shall I do," he exclaimed ever and anon, quite uncertain what course to pursue.

The time he passed in incertitude and conjecture had carried him on unawares, till he perceived the dawn of day peeping through the apertures in the roof of the bazaar. He then fell to again to replace the stone in its former state, for he had not time to give it a

new position, when he heard the watchman opening the gates. In this dilemma, he took up the key and leaving his work unfinished, followed the impulse it gave him. The faster he walked, the stronger the impulse, until having quitted the bazaar, he proceeded towards the gate of the city, which was at hand, and which also was opened at the same time as the bazaar, and once having passed through it, he found himself in the plain, with his face towards the mountains. It was then that the pressure of the key became most strongly manifest, and, indeed, it might be said, to be so urgent that it would not allow him to delay. He found himself making his way across the plain in a manner most miraculous. Nothing stopped him. He went over every impediment with an ease that astonished him, his legs seemed to have acquired new life, his lungs played with renewed freedom in his breast. He seemed to be running a race, and bounded over hedge and ditch, rock and thicket with the agility of an antelope. In his course, Azbeaz possessed just enough wit to ask

himself this question. Is this me? he found himself approaching the mountain with fearful velocity and then this apprehension shot across his mind, 'when I get to its base what shall I do? I cannot leap over a mountain!' But every step conducted him nearer—the key carried him on with a swiftness that took away his breath and almost lifted him off his legs. At length, he perceived a break on the surface of a dark mass of metallic looking rock, and immediately round a projection, he saw an immense door imbedded in the stratum, and also, what he soon ascertained to be the termination of his miraculous journey, a key-hole. He then without apprehension pressed forwards, and ere another minute had elapsed, the key flew straightway into the spot prepared for its reception. But what tongue can hope to describe, the astounding effects produced by this consummation? of a sudden a sound was heard to ring through the air like the clashing of thousands of metallic meteors, a sound that seemed to make the mountains shake, which reverberated in echoes through the vallies and drove the impending rocks from

their foundations—a sound which appeared to annihilate the existence of every living thing, causing the current of the blood to stop and paralysing the stoutest limbs. The beasts of the field ran to and fro in wild desolation—birds clustered together for protection—the wild animals in the wilderness grew tame with apprehension. Azbeaz at the appalling sound grew faint and trembled throughout his frame, but when, at the same moment, he beheld the grim and portentous looking door fly open with a crash, such as nothing human could conceive, the poor wretch at once fell to earth, lost in a trance that looked like death. And there we must, for the moment, leave him to see what took place in the city.

The day had set in with a sultry and oppressive feeling in the air, which made men imagine that something extraordinary was about to happen. A strange commotion had taken place in the bazaar at the discovery of the displaced stepping stones, and particularly at the sight of the small iron door and cell within which the key had been deposited. Every sort of surprise was afloat. Some of the oldest

citizens shook their heads and said, 'something must happen.' A very old man came forwards and asserted that he remembered the fixing of these stones, and that much mystery had been observed on the occasion. The half open state of Azbeaz's stall was remarked, then the suspicious mattock and spade, and when their owner came to claim them, it was clearly ascertained that Azbeaz was the man who had deranged the stepping-stones. Instantly a search was instituted, the watchmen were questioned, no one could account for his absence, and great curiosity was excited.

The King, as usual at noon, was seated on his throne in his Hall of Audience, holding the great selam. All the great officers of state were present — the King's appointed flatterer and public haranguer was on that day in great force, and had been more than usually happy in the terms of his adulation. He had expatiated much upon his favourite theme, the omnipotence of Kings, and that day had hit upon a new idea, with which he seemed to be greatly pleased, although the royal

countenance, like a blind man who does not know what passes around him, so long accustomed to receive adulation, exhibited no outward expression of pleasure.

The flatterer said, that when a King was born, the stars gave each other the wink, and exclaimed as they shook with joy in their orbits, now let us put our heads together to make his reign fortunate, and should there by chance be an evil disposed mind in the kingdom, the moment the royal eyebrow (which was always under the especial care of the stars) was once shaken, it was seen to produce that powerful awe in the mind, which made it instantly forsake its wickedness.

"Kings," he exclaimed, "thus protected, can have no fear. They are above apprehension—all nature works for their well-being, and no event ever takes place which does not make them feel their superiority over all other mortals."

These words had scarcely escaped the flatterer's lips ere the terrific crash of the great gong was heard. Consternation and tremor overtook even the most stout-hearted—the

weakest fell on their faces in dismay, whilst an universal shout of apprehension was heard to lift itself into the air. The King, who not a minute before had been upheld as independent of all exterior events, was the first to fall from his throne, and be cast down in a swoon. Nothing was ever more pitiable than his abject state—a state which gave the lie in its fullest extent to the flatterer's words, for on this awful occasion he was as much unheeded as the meanest of God's creatures, all being intent on self-preservation, and none having either the power or the inclination to go to his succour, when all seemed doomed to undergo one destiny.

The consternation was not confined to the court, it was felt instantaneously throughout the city. The vibration caused by the overwhelming sound was felt in every house, throughout the streets, the bazaars, the market-places—all the inhabitants remained transfixed with awe, and no one had wit enough, at the moment, to reflect whence came so sudden a convulsion.

At length the vizier, who was a man of

nerve, having somewhat recovered his self-possession, arose from his place and proceeded to give help to the prostrate monarch. Raising him up and placing him against the cushions of his throne, he said:

"The hour is at length come when the Zilallah, the shadow of Allah upon earth, must become a substance. Let us arm and be ready, for the great prophecy is about to be accomplished."

"Dog!" exclaimed the King, having had time to look around him to remark that all was safe, that no man was hurt, and that his power was undiminished; "dog! what words are these? The King is above all prophecy! Call hither the priests, and let them inform us what is the meaning of this consternation, and let us arm to be ready for whatever may happen. The Shah is not a man to give up his throne for an old woman's tale!"

The vizier, who was the depositary of the many traditions relating to the great gong, having heard the King's words, said no more, but went to his seat at the royal gate to give the necessary orders for arming the

people. He collected the heads of tens, of hundreds and of thousands, and ordered them, according to the rules of the kingdom, to be in readiness to march at a moment's notice, for the tradition of old was, that when the gong sounded towards the mountain, armed men should be called to issue from the city.

As soon as the inhabitants had, in some measure, recovered from the shock, they prepared to encounter disaster, but of what kind no one could tell. All was confusion and dismay, but every one agreed that the decrees of fate were imperative, and mankind must be prepared for the event.

In the meanwhile, the King collected together the priests, the astrologers and the wise men, and from them he enquired how in their wisdom they interpreted the event that had just occurred. In his inmost heart, he felt all that which usurpers are likely to feel when there is a chance of their pretensions to the throne being disputed, and had he spoken the truth, would have made but a sorry apology for himself; but he was a politic King, although cruel and pusillanimous. The priests, the

astrologers and the wise men having bowed themselves down before the King, the head of the law, an aged and reverend man, took upon himself to answer his royal master's question. Impelled by the urgency of the case, he lifted up his voice with the courage of one who tarries upon the brink of eternity.

"O King," said he, "may Allah take you into his holy keeping, for the time is now come when there can be no trust but in his mercy. Tradition and the sayings of wise men handed down to us from our fathers, inform us that when the great gong on the turret shall sound as it has done to-day, it announces great and dire disasters. What they may be is entirely in the hands of fate, but your slave will not conceal from your Majesty that such miseries are specially directed against cruel and unjust governors, and long has it been said that in the fullness of time, the throne of this kingdom will return to its proper owner. Such, oh King! are the sayings of the ancient wise men."

"So is it!" exclaimed the king, his eyes flashing fury, although he felt a sinking at the

heart which gave an unsteadiness of purpose to his whole frame. "Old man! dog! is it thus you speak to your sovereign? After all we are a King. Have we not armies at command? have we not generals? is there lack of money in our treasury? why do you throw unmeaning words into the air?" He sat for some time premeditating a dreadful oath, and plotting in his brain a cruel punishment for the head of the law, the priests, astrologers and wise men, when a herald, his face pale with terror, was seen running headlong through the courts and allowed to make his way to the King's presence. His sudden appearance arrested the cruel intentions circulating in the King's mind, and drew his attention into another channel. "What is this?" exclaimed his Majesty as soon as he perceived the herald, catching at the same time the infection of his fear. "Are ye mad? What want of respect is this? Speak, oh little man!"

"By the salt of the Shah," said the herald, "I have seen a strange thing."

"What thing have you seen?" said the King, with increasing impatience.

"As I stood on the turret of the gate looking towards the mountains, I first saw a great dust and then a black speck on the plain, that speck has been increasing, and is spreading itself wider and wider. I cannot say what it is, but by the soul of the King, I became frightened and ran hither."

"The man is mad!" said the King. "Locusts appear first a mere speck and then spread. Is the fool come to laugh at our beards?" Again he was about to order a cruel punishment, when a superior officer arrived and exclaimed with increased terror, that the peasants were flocking in from the fields in dismay, asserting that an army was approaching, and that no time was to be lost in closing the city gates. Upon this the King became visibly agitated, whilst the wise men might have been seen to smile, the smile of reproof. Instantly orders were dispatched into every quarter of the city to collect the troops, whilst the King betook himself to the high tower in his palace, which commanding a view of the surrounding country, there he hoped to ascertain, with his

own eyes, what might be the state of affairs in the plain.

We left Azbeaz in a trance extended before the gate of an immense cavern. He lay there for some time, when gradually recovering his self-possession, he opened his eyes and observing the surrounding objects, felt that he was called upon to do something more than look about him. He proceeded cautiously towards the gate and straightway entered the mysterious cave, composed of rocks, so black and shining, that the whole seemed as if it were of iron ore.

At first, so dark did everything appear, that his eye could discern nothing but one undefined mass of impenetrable gloom, but having stood a while, little by little he discovered that the cavern was subdivided into an infinity of minor inlets, seemingly avenues into its deepest recesses—he walked forward to a large prominent stone in the centre, and having placed his foot upon it, of a sudden he heard a loud ringing noise as if of armour falling, when to his utmost surprise and apprehension, he be-

held at the orifice of each subdivision of the cavern, men clad in complete armour, prostrate on the ground, and arrayed behind them, he beheld a succession of grisly faces, apparently the heads of columns of troops prepared for a march.

The bewildered Azbeaz could neither think nor speak from excess of astonishment—he had no nerves for the encounter of magicians or enchanters, and when he saw the servile devotion of the prostrate men before him, he shrunk within himself as one who feels unworthy of unmerited honours.

He had not stood very long, when an immense colossal figure clad, from head to foot in shining steel advanced from a deep recess, and placing one knee to the ground, in a voice of humility said, "we the slaves of the key salute thee, oh King! we come to do thy bidding, to put down cruelty and oppression and to uphold merit."

When raising himself up, an iron litter was brought forward, upon which Azbeaz was invited to sit, and thus he was marched forward

followed by bodies of men all clad in black armour, bearing shields and wielding lances, and making collectively a mass that looked like a column of polished iron.

The army thus headed by Azbeaz though small, was compact as the ore it represented, and as they emerged from the cavern, took the direction of the city. They marched in solemn silence—not a word was spoken, nor was a sound heard save the heavy tramping of the troops and the clashing of their armour. When they had got within sight of the city, the column began to extend itself and exhibit a larger front. Azbeaz all this while sat immoveable in his iron litter, waiting with patience the result of this extraordinary adventure, but lost in surprise at the strangeness of his position.

The King in the meanwhile had reached the summit of the tower before the army had extended its front, and when he perceived the smallness of its size, he took confidence and laughed the supposed danger to scorn. The flatterers by whom he was surrounded encouraged him to believe that the whole was child's play, and that no sooner would his troops appear in the field than the invaders would disperse.

The grand vizier in person having headed the troops, ordered the gates to be thrown open and advanced to meet the coming foe. The King became a degree more alarmed, when he perceived the army extending its front; but when he saw the great number of his own troops, he again resumed confidence and feigned a scornful laugh.

The conflicting armies were now fairly drawn up in array before each other; and strange to say, ere the grand vizier had given the word of command to attack, the sword of each of the royal combatants was unconsciously drawn from its scabbard, and suddenly seen to fly through the air, and making straight in the direction of the invading army, become attached with the adhesiveness of wax to the shields of their opponents.

The ringing sound produced by this extraordinary concussion was heard far and wide, and inspired terror and dismay in the disarmed troops, whilst it became the signal for the renewed forward movement of the invaders. Magic and magnetism were here combined, and the result was conclusive and instanta-

neous. The King's troops without arms, became like a flock of sheep, before a pack of wolves and fled without hesitation, seeking shelter within the city walls. They entered in utter confusion, creating alarm and desolation by their account of the magic exercised against them, and shewing the inutility of resistance.

The King having seen the performance of the miracle from the tower top, was led away senseless. It was then that the utter pusillanimity of his character became remarkable, and had he been capable of making an observation, he would have commented upon the ingratitude and falseness of men, who so long as prosperity shone upon him remained faithful, but who, the moment reverse ensued, left him alone and unprotected.

The invaders now proceeded in grim array to the very walls of the city, and having conducted Azbeaz in safety to the city gates, which flew open at his approach, he made his entry surrounded by his black escort to the astonishment and wonder of all beholders.

"Is not that Azbeaz the shoemaker?" said they as he passed by with all the circumstance

and power of a monarch. "If it be not him, it is one very much like him, for he is laughing still."

"It is Azbeaz," said a neighbour in the bazaar, who saw him upheld above the crowd, "there is his very cap—there also is his well-known hump."

"By my soul," exclaimed a third, "we shall have a merry monarch if it be Azbeaz, for he never appears but to grin."

The whole city was in a state of astonishment and uncertainty, apprehensive of evil and still looking forward to good.

Those who had caught a glimpse of their new monarch, ran busily with the news to his brother Sakalchok, exclaiming:

"*Mujdeh, Mujdeh,* good news, your brother is King!" whilst he being thus informed, looked bewildered with the intelligence.

"Azbeaz! King!" he exclaimed, "what ashes have fallen upon my head! what becomes of the dirt which I have so long made him eat —whither shall I fly to hide myself? but it cannot be—what words are these? Azbeaz King! no, such a thing was never before

heard of in the world—whatever may happen I will go see."

Upon which covering his head over with a shawl, and leaving his attendants behind, he glided through the streets to obtain a glimpse of the new King's face.

The five old men too, who had so grossly insulted Azbeaz, began to shake in their shoes. They were afraid to stir abroad when apprized of the astonishing fact, lest seeing any one of them, the injuries he had received at their hands might recur to his recollection. However, when they brought to mind the character of benevolence which he enjoyed, they flattered themselves that among his bad qualities he did not count revenge.

In the meanwhile, Azbeaz on his iron litter upheld above the heads of the surrounding crowd, was born forward by his victorious bands, headed and directed by their colossal chieftain, until he reached the royal palace, the gates of which denoting an expiring effort to save the King, he found closed. But upon his approach, the iron bolts and fastenings by which they were kept together, darted forth,

and afforded an easy entrance. He then was led straightway to the identical golden throne, so recently occupied by his predecessor, taken from his litter, and installed upon it with all the outward demonstrations of respect shewn to eastern Kings on such an occasion. All this while, he, the man Azbeaz, was considering within his inmost thoughts, whether what he was witnessing and experienced in his own person was real, or a dream.

His face exhibited a stolid look of incredulity, although never, for a moment, cheated out of its smile. The only words he said and which he constantly repeated to himself were, "we shall see," as if he were conscious that he had not yet reached the end of his adventures, reserving a final adjustment of himself whenever he should be fixed in his new position; like the cogitation which a man may be supposed to hold within his breast, when falling from a great height—saying this is all very well as long as it lasts.

As soon as Azbeaz was seated on the throne, his resistless protector having drawn up his troops in a line before him, he cast his eyes

around, above and below in utter surprise at the glitter and magnificence which surrounded him, and scarcely could he venture to place himself at his ease upon the costly and luxuriant cushions, embroidered in gold and precious stones, with which his seat was overspread. Wherever he gazed, he beheld emblems of royalty, and grandeurs only to be seen in King's houses, such as paintings, gildings, precious stones, silken hangings and costly carpets. He looked beseechingly around into every man's face, as if he would enquire, are all these things for me?

He had not sat long, before his conductor falling down on his face before him, said; "oh King live for ever. We the slaves of the key have now performed our appointed task, in virtue of which we again deliver to your sublime Majesty the instrument of the power by which we have been enabled to act." Upon which, arising, he drew from his breast the key, and placed it with all due respect before the throne. He then made another prostration, and afterwards in a manner incredible to the astounded and bewildered Az-

beaz, he and his troops disappeared from the courts of the palace, and from the city, leaving the inhabitants to pursue their wonted avocations.

Azbeaz had wit enough to perceive that his whole safety depended upon the possession of the key, which he forthwith placed within the folds of his girdle, until he should have time and opportunity to deposit it in a safer place, and he had scarcely done so, before he perceived himself surrounded by richly dressed men, who stationed themselves in different parts of the court which was spread before the throne.

These were the nobles, the ministers of state, the generals, the men of the law and the courtiers; who having witnessed the miraculous manner in which their country had been deprived of one King, and replaced by another, came to offer all the necessary congratulations on the occasion, and to seek by an exhibition of their loyalty, a renewed installation in their respective situations.

After the due prostrations of body had been made, according to the prescribed forms of

etiquette, the grand vizier stept forward, and renewing his obeisance, covering over his hands with the sleeves of his cloak and shewing other marks of high respect, said,

"It is right and proper that the meanest of your slaves, by virtue of his office, should inform your Majesty, the *kebleh* of the world, and the asylum of nations, that appointed as your Majesty has been by Allah, and that destiny which rules over mankind, to be our King and governor; it is expedient that the proper forms of installation into the kingly office should be effected in order that we, your Majesty's slaves, men of the law, men of the pen, and men of the sword, may be enabled forthwith to present your Majesty to the nation and the people of this city, as their lawful sovereign."

To which speech, there was an universal assent given by the congregated courtiers, by the words *beli, beli,* and *hai, hai,* words which were intended as incense to the foot of the throne.

Azbeaz listened with unfeigned surprise and curiosity to the words of the grand vizier, and

when he had finished his speech, beckoned to him to approach, which being done, he said in a most confidential tone,

"Now as you have a soul, tell me who you are?" said Azbeaz.

"Your slave is your highness's grand vizier," answered the other.

"Now tell me who I am?" returned Azbeaz.

"Your Majesty is our lawful Shah and governor," said the vizier.

"I ask again," said Azbeaz, "I ask you to swear by my beard, which you see is scanty and white, as well as by your own which is thick and black, that you do not lie, and that I am what you really tell me I am."

"Who am I," said the vizier, "that should not swear whatever it pleaseth your Majesty to order—I swear by your Majesty's sacred beard, and by my own unworthy head, that what I have said is true, and that you are now our lawful King and governor."

"I tell you what, friend!" said Azbeaz, after a long pause, "you have eaten a lie! it was but two days ago that I was a shoemaker

in the bazaar, Azbeaz by name—can I have become a King, what words are these?"

"Destiny ordaineth all things for the best in this world," said the grand vizier. "Allah who can quicken where there was no life, can also make of his living creatures whatsoever it pleaseth him—your Majesty can no more make your sacred person a shoemaker's then before it could have made itself a Shah."

"It is hard work to believe all this," said Azbeaz, "but we will see," and then in louder words he exclaimed. "Well what am I to do?"

Upon which the chief of the law, the elder of elders, was brought forward bearing the sword of state, which according to the old forms was to be buckled on the royal person by his hands, and said, having made his lowest obedience, "In the name of Allah I come."

"This may all be very well,' said Azbeaz, "as long as no one says no—but where is the other King, he may not like all this, I'll not be a King as long as I have not got his consent—bring him here and let us see. There is no reason because he beat me un-

justly, that I should owe him a grudge—I'm all for fair play. It is a King's business if he choses it to beat his subjects—it is theirs to obey. Perhaps, I may one day do the like."

Upon this there was a general search made for the late King: he was sought for throughout the palace, in all the courts and apartments of the harem, throughout the city, but no where was he to be found. It was suggested that he might have been carried off by the miraculous iron army, and such was the rumour throughout the city. One, indeed, swore that he had seen him in the iron litter, but whatever was his fate, true it is that he was no where to be found, and when this intelligence was reported to Azbeaz, he no longer made any difficulties, but submitted to go through all the ceremony of installation.

At a fortunate moment, selected by the astrologers, the sword of state was buckled round the waist of the future King by the elder of elders, and when this important event was achieved, loud were the congratulations

of the assembly, but more particularly so were the words of the King's flatterer, who totally unacquainted with the character of the new monarch, exerted every faculty of his brain to invent new strains of adulation. Having made himself quite sure that he was secure from the reappearance of the late Shah, he broke out as follows:

"Oh wonderful! oh astonishing! oh marvellous! see the good fortune that has been vouchsafed to our nation; in one day, as Allah is great, in one small moment have its destinies changed, from darkness to light, from the beating of the winter tempest, to the dawn of delightful spring; from the pestilence of a charnel house to the fragrance of a rose garden. When our necks were all bared to the sharp cutting scimitar, when cruelty and desolation stalked through men's houses, and life was as uncertain as the whirlwind on the plain, suddenly we are freed from such disasters; joy, peace, and security are brought to us, in the person of our shadow of the Almighty—of our centre of perfection—of our firmament of happy constellations. Oh wonderful! oh astonishing! oh mar-

vellous!—see our blessed King—see his glorious person—see his benign countenance. He is, indeed, a King—not the oppressor of his people—not a cruel tyrant—not an avaricious extortioner. No! he lives but to do good, see him when he walks. *Bah! bah! bah!* what grace! hear him when he speaks, oh wonderful! what eloquence!"

Here Azbeaz, who had listened with curiosity, heightened by the smile on his countenance, exclaimed:

"What dirt is that fellow eating? In the name of the prophet! what is he speaking about? is he mad? If you are talking about me, oh little man, let me tell you, that I don't stand having my beard laughed at more than other men—that I call things by their proper names—I call a dog, a dog, and you—a fool. It is bad enough to be a King, but I wont be called names into the bargain."

This strange speech, so totally unlike any speech that had ever been uttered by an eastern monarch, struck all those who heard it with unbounded astonishment. In a court where

no word of truth was ever spoken, where deceit was taught as a science, where men by dint of experience learnt the value of every false assertion, almost with the same certainty as if the real truth was spoken at once, to hear it announced by the sovereign himself, that things were to be called by their right names, and that he already felt it a burthen to be a King, were facts scarcely credible.

The flatterer learnt that his occupation was gone, and all who lived by deceit concluded that they must begin the difficult labour of becoming honest men.

As soon as every preparation had been made for the ceremony of shewing himself to the people; Azbeaz, with the sword of state hanging upon his thigh, was taken to the open chamber, situated over the principal gate of the palace, looking into the great maidan or public square, and there supported by the grand vizier and the elder of elders standing on either side, he was presented to the wondering multitude.

The astonishment of the citizens upon perceiving Azbeaz's well known face and person was so great, that they could scarcely bring

themselves to go through the necessary forms of prostation and acclamation.

There was one among the crowd who gazed more ardently than the rest at that face, which still shewed its prominent teeth, and bore its wonted smile, and who trembled as he gazed, and that individual was his brother Sakalchok.

Indignation, envy, hatred, contempt, fear and apprehension, and a stricken conscience all assailed the heart of this wretched man by turns. He was incredulous to the very last that it could be his brother, and was constantly exclaiming to himself, "it is impossible! it cannot he," until he was driven out of this uncertainty by the words which he heard repeated around him in the crowd.

"In truth, men say right," said one, "it is Azbeaz, there he is with his beard, little and white, wonderful luck was he born with!"

"Whoever heard of a shoemaker King!" said another, "I shall be a Shah next, who am a tinker."

"I suppose now that he is King, he won't pay me for the wax he bought of me as a shoemaker," remarked a chandler.

"If he has got a heart," said a shoemaker, "he will do something for those of his own trade, and lower the price of leather."

So many observations did Sakalchok hear, that he could no longer live in the illusion that this man was not his brother.

He then bethought himself what line of conduct to pursue, whether to implore forgiveness, make restitution, and beg for the continuance of his appointment as court jeweller with hope of further advancement, or wait the tide of events and deliver himself over to the decrees of destiny. He finished by doing nothing, but returned to his home a prey to all the torments of uncertainty.

On the way, he met the five old men who sat squatted together in a corner of the bazaar, gloomily consulting upon their probable fate, seeing that they must have incurred Azbeaz's displeasure by the indignities they had put upon him. As soon as they perceived Sakalchok, they all exclaimed, "welcome, welcome—may fortune attend you, your brother is King, may your shadow never be less, give us your advice, the King you know is our

enemy, we have made him eat dirt—what shall we do to conciliate him ?"

" What do I know ?" said Sakalchok in no humour to answer such unreasonable enquiries. " Let every man trim his own beard," he said no more and walked on; the five old men had no time to take offence, but they remained perfectly silent, each wrapt up in their own apprehensions; and, perhaps, already feeling a certain tingling on the soles of their feet, a sensation well known to those who have once tasted bastinado.

In the meanwhile, the ceremony of presenting the King to his people having been performed, was as usual brought to a conclusion by the solemn promulgation of the *Khotbeh* by the principal crier of the court, who with a sonorous voice and most emphatic manner, pronounced the new Shah's titles. He was called the Asylum of the Universe, the Common Centre to which the whole world bows, the King of Kings, the descendant from Kings and the origin of Kings.

Azbeaz listened with patience to the end, when calling the crier to appear before him, he

said: "Man! do you know what abomination you have been eating? Who told you that I am a descendant of Kings? What words are these? Why without rhyme or reason will you tell lies? I am the son of Mustapha the tanner, who was the son of a barber, who was the son of a bear leader. You'll please to say so for the future, and then lies will no longer arise from the bottom of your throat to make my face blush, and then men will learn that Kings are no more than other men, of the same flesh and blood, all going to the same place, some to good and some to evil."

Words cannot express the astonishment that took place in the minds of all present when they heard this extraordinary speech. "Are we alive, or do we dream? Here is a King such as no one ever saw or heard of. He tells no lies himself, and will not allow others to do so. Another King would have cut off heads had any one dared to hint that his father was a tanner—this one seems to glory in it. Truth of itself is enough to make him noble. Let us see how he will comport himself this day next year."

Azbeaz's principal care, as soon as he had disposed of the ceremony of his installation, was to deposit his wonder working key in a secure place. Accordingly he directed his steps to the harem, that place so sacred to all the inhabitants of the East, and having entered it with due solemnity, he there met with a scene for which he was but little prepared. Never, indeed, had it occurred to him, having gained possession of his predecessors' throne, that he was also destined to possess his wives. He paused and drew back when he perceived the multitude of females awaiting him as he entered the great court of the Anderoon. A long train of magnificently dressed women was marshalled into two lines, through which he was invited to walk, and a band of singers and minstrels went before him, rending the air with songs and with the sounds of instruments. They sang the laudatory airs with which they had been accustomed to flatter their former master, in which his person was compared to every thing that was most enchanting, and in which his good qualities

were exaggerated even to the attributes of divinity. Upon his approach, they all knelt down and kissed the ground. His path was spread with rich stuffs and bottles containing sugar were broken before his feet.

Azbeaz, dazzled by the beauty of the women and abashed by the intenseness of the adulation, shrunk with dismay at what he had to encounter. It was but the other day, he thought, that I ventured to woo and was rejected by one daughter of the moon, and here hundreds vie with each other who shall obtain the distinction of a look. But, by my beard, this will never do. "Here, fair one," said he, beckoning to one of the singers who was straining her throat most zealously in his favour, "tell me wherefore do you make this extraordinary noise and say such extravagant things?—are you all mad perchance?"

The slave fell at his feet, and exclaimed: "You are our King and we are your slaves."

"So is it," said Azbeaz, shaking his head at the same time, in doubt. "Well, I suppose it is so, sinee everybody says it—but because

I am the Shah, it does not follow that I am to be the fool of the country. Prithee, fair one," he continued to address the minstrel, "you have been all singing at the top of your throats, and comparing my body to a cypress tree. Now look at my back, it is as crooked as a ram's horn; how can you tell such lies? Then you assert that my eyes are as large as those of an antelope. By the prophet, everybody knows they are not larger than those of a mole; and as for my *zulfs*, my curls, which you assert smell of myrrh and aloes, I have only two or three coarse grey hairs belonging to me, which can only smell of my old sheepskin cap. How can you all deceive yourselves after this fashion? If I am to be your Shah, I will not be the King of lies, but the King of truth."

Then calling the head of the eunuchs to him, a gaunt negro, with a face of unrivalled ugliness, he said: "If I am to command these women, you may inform them the sooner they find themselves husbands the better, both for them and me. They are none of mine. Every man sits upon his own heels,

so let each have his own mate. And as for you, you may go and hang yourself, for your craft is at an end."

Strange was all this in an eastern and much more in a royal harem. The singing, the music and the processions were suppressed, and any jealousy and heart-burning that might exist to obtain the new King's favour were soon crushed. The elder women, however, broke out into downright lamentation, and accused the King of cruelty and injustice; but to those who had feeling, new life accompanied by hope was opened to them, and they longed to make themselves agreeable to objects more fitted to secure their affections than an ugly shoemaker, though he were a King.

As soon as Azbeaz was left to himself, he took the key from his girdle, and selecting a place in the corner of the room under his own seat, he there deposited it for the present. He then desired that the grand vizier might appear before him, when he spoke to him as follows:

"It is now plain that I am the Shah. God

only knows why or wherefore—but so it is. You are, as you tell me, the vizier, and, consequently, I suppose a wise man. That is not my case. I cannot call myself a wise man, for although I am the Shah, yet it is as little in consequence of my merit, as it was in consequence of having ten fingers that I became a shoemaker. All things great and small are directed by powers of which we know nothing. Allah is Allah, and whether we will or not, he is still Allah. Now you being the wise man and knowing how to govern a kingdom, you will please to tell me what I am to do from one year's end to another, from morning till night, and from hour to hour. I feel that my time belongs to the country, so does my conduct; therefore, tell me how I am to fill up one and direct the other."

The grand vizier, a self-sufficient personage, squared his elbows and inflated his person, preparatory to giving an appropriate reply to the King's inquiry. He began, as usual, with fine phrases, and having once got well into his subject, he knew not where to stop. First, he descanted largely upon etiquette, upon the science of

rising up and sitting down—upon going out and coming in—upon speech and forms of speech—upon appropriate dress, when the *taj*, or crown, is to be worn, when the cap with the shawl, or when the plain cap—upon the close vesture, short coats and ample cloaks—upon receiving ambassadors, sitting near or far off; in short, so entirely did the grand vizier make it manifest that the kingly office was more made up of precedents and old forms, than of the actual workings of the brain, that Azbeaz cried out, with a long yawn:

"Very difficult is all this to recollect! If this it is to be a King, I shall never make a good one." He then stopped the vizier, who would willingly have continued his lecture, and said: "What you have said is no doubt perfectly right—so be it. However, there is one thing in which I want to try my hand, and that is justice. I wish to try it immediately. You must, in the first place, order my brother Sakalchok, the jeweller to appear before me; in the next, you will send (to a house) which he designated) for five old men who live there or thereabouts; and in the

third, you must discover and bring to me a youth, who on the day that I was sorely beaten by the late Shah, bound up my wounds and took care of me. If I am to be a King, let me try what a King can do."

He had not waited long ere it was announced to him that his brother was in attendance. As soon as Sakalchok appeared, he fell on his face in the most abject manner, and having kissed the ground, arose and stood in the attitude of one condemned to death. Azbeaz having desired him to draw near, addressed him in the following words:

"We all must bend to destiny, which is nothing else than the decrees of Allah, and, therefore, I make no apology for being your King, although I am your youngest brother. Had you behaved as you ought to have done when I was in humble circumstances, you would not stand before me in the abject, and, consequently, disgusting position in which you now appear. You would have come with your nose up and your cap on one side, and have rejoiced at my elevation, instead of which, you bear envy, hatred and malice in your heart,

and concluding that such passions equally possess me, you appear like a criminal worthy of death before me. Shame upon you! As a brother I say this. Now I will speak to you as a shoemaker. Have you brought Sir, the sum of money you owe me? I have made shoes for you and your family for years, and have not received one farthing. Pay me instantly, or otherwise you shall incur the utmost rigour of the law."

Sakalchok, upon hearing these words, became elated, for he hoped by the payment of this debt to be quit of further punishment.

"As I am your Majesty's slave," said he, "whatever your Majesty may order, I am ready to pay. The debt is a poor one, not worthy your Majesty's notice. Let me double or triple the amount. Your slave is ready."

"I only ask for my own," said Azbeaz, "for that which, when I was poor and powerless, you constantly refused to pay me. I know the sum well. It was one hundred and fifty piastres and ten copper coins. I want that and no more."

The trembling Sakalchok with pleasure

counted out the money and placed it before the Shah.

"Well—this is well. You have now settled the account with the shoemaker; you have now to deal with the Shah. I am the Shah, and as such, I am the source of justice and the support of what is right. You have behaved as a cruel, unnatural, unjust, proud and arrogant man. Unnatural and cruel as a relation, unjust as a citizen, proud and arrogant in your general conduct. For these delinquencies I intend to reprove you. Your pride must be humbled, you must be taught the miseries of unjust dealing. I, as the Shah, destitute you from your public employment of court jeweller, and I become the steward of all your wealth, as long as it shall seem fit for me to be so. Learn from this what injustice means. You shall forthwith be installed in my shop, and there you may make shoes as I have done. Thus you will learn humility, and know what it is to labour for your bread. Go. I have said it."

At hearing these words, the unfortunate Sakalchok fell on his face in despair, "pity,

oh pity," he exclaimed, "forgive me, forgive my past faults—take everything, but spare my money. I cannot make shoes. As your slave is less than the least, he implores you to reflect that he never made a shoe in his life."

"Go—learn!" exclaimed the inflexible Azbeaz, upon which his brother was dragged away, and orders were given that the royal commands should be enforced.

The five old men were next brought into the presence, and even at a distance, the moment they had caught a glimpse of the King on his musnud, they fell to the ground and touched the pavement with their foreheads.

"Come forward old men," exclaimed Azbeaz, "it will be time to humble yourselves when you have heard what I have to say."

They all arose, and covering their bodies over carefully, sidled onward till they stood immediately facing the King, with their heads down, looking more dead than alive.

"Perhaps you will recollect certain words," said Azbeaz, "which I once pronounced in the form of a prediction—neither of us then suspected how soon they would come true; now

had you behaved to me with the civility and kindness which are due from God's creatures one towards the other, what necessity would there be for your present abject condition; you only invite me to have you well beaten. You stand in the position of curs, which dare not shew their faces out of their own parish; you avow yourselves to be materials for the bastinado—sacks to be beaten—old carpets to be dusted; you might have come before me with your five chins in the air, inhaling the breath of heaven, with the independance of men who have nothing to fear. You might have put your hands on your hips and thrown your five fingers into my face, had I exacted anything from you unjustly. But as it is, I am the aggrieved man, besides being a despotic King—I can make you pluck out each other's beards hair by hair—make you spit in each other's faces—I can set you begging from door to door, making those whom you have before despised turn their backs upon you and say, 'ha! ha!'—I could render you miserable old men to the end of your days, in consequence of those words of contumely you taunted me

with when I asked you a plain question and made a simple demand. What have you to say for yourselves ?—speak first, you youngest old man," said he addressing himself to the youngest uncle of her whom he sought as a wife, " speak and let me hear what you have to say."

" What can I say ?" said the youngest uncle, stroking down his face with one hand and keeping his cloak well wrapt over him with the other. " I am less than an ounce of dust. The measure of the abomination which I have eaten has long been filled up ; whatever your Majesty has said—has, mashallah ! been well said. True it is, oh King ! we are five wretched old men, we have been biting our thumbs ever since that fatal day, and saying from morning to night, ' we have made a mistake.' Forgive us ! Forgive us! in favour of her whom you once loved—of her who cries day and night that she has lost her apple."

" What apple ?" exclaimed Azbeaz suddenly softened by hearing his beloved mentioned.

" The apple of her eye to be sure," answered the youngest old man, " who but your Majesty has she ever loved, or ever can love ?"

At these words, Azbeaz appeared still more touched, and the remaining four old men having observed this, corroborated the assertion of the youngest old man by saying,

"Beli! Beli!—yes, yes—he speaks the truth; the maiden is dying of grief and disappointment."

Azbeaz here made a solemn pause in his proceedings, because the assertion of the old men that he was beloved, opened the channels of his former weakness, and the beauty of her whom he had once so ardently admired, flashed before his eyes with resistless charm.

"If I thought what you now tell me were true," said Azbeaz thoughtfully, "the whole state of the case would be altered."

"By the Shah's soul—by the beard of the centre of the universe—by the crown on his head—by the armlet on his arm," said the five old men with uplifted voices, "we swear that it is true."

"How am I to know that it is true?" said the King, "a Shah and a shoemaker are two very different persons, although they may still have the same hump, the same monkey face,

the same prominent teeth, the same beard little and white. Mark that old gentlemen—I will not have the finger of derision pointed at me, recollect I no longer wield the awl, I have sticks and arms at command."

"See her—see the maiden herself," exclaimed an uncle, who now saw an escape from his difficulties. "Allow her to speak her own sentiments, and if she does not acknowledge herself to be the devoted slave, the grateful hand-maid of her King, then treat us as we deserve; we are your sacrifice, whatsoever your Majesty ordains—we will say, upon our eyes be it."

"Bring her hither," said Azbeaz, "and we will see. But mark me, I do not intend to force her inclinations, and should there be any deception, all I say is, open well your eyes."

The five old men then left his presence, and presently two veiled females were introduced, the mother escorting her daughter. As soon as the room had been cleared, Azbeaz requested the women to unveil, when the well remembered charms of the maiden who had enslaved his heart were revealed to him, as well as the

less attractive features of her mother. Azbeaz would willingly have given his crown to secure the advantages of beauty to himself, and thereby become acceptable to the lovely creature who stood before him; sorely did he feel how little wealth, power and greatness of position had to weigh against individual merit, and when he contemplated his ugliness, he felt that it was not in nature that he could be loved.

"What is this that I hear, thou pearl of beauty!" said Azbeaz addressing himself to the maiden, "is it true that I have found favour in your sight, and that you are willing to make me happy."

"We are your slaves," exclaimed the mother without allowing her daughter to answer, "we have but one wish and that is to please you. Who is this poor lowly daughter that she should venture to have a will of her own?"

"Allow her to speak," said Azbeaz, "it is not you we want to wed—let the maiden speak. Tell me sugar lips," said he to the daughter, "tell me what are the secrets of your heart,

and whatever they be do not conceal the truth."

"She has no secrets," again answered the mother, looking towards the daughter, fearful lest this invitation to candour from the King might really impel the daughter to speak the truth. "If she has a secret, it is that of loving the King above all things, longing to make the dust of his slippers colyrium for her eyes."

The weak girl feeling the dilemma in which she was placed, having been tutored by her relations to avow her love for Azbeaz, whilst she abhorred the idea of becoming his wife, fell into a nervous state of distressing indecision, the consequence of which proved itself by tears which she could in no wise restrain.

"How is this, fair one," said the King, "is our love to be requited by tears—if my words be pleasing to you, wherefore cry? if not, why do you not speak?"

Upon this the maiden falling on her knees in an attitude of supplication, exclaimed; "pity, pity, I am a poor weak one—I know

not what to do—is it a crime to have loved before I was told to love in the proper place?"

"What words are these?" exclaimed the mother in a rage—"loved before, indeed! how dare you love when the centre of the universe commands otherwise?"

"Hold your peace woman!" exclaimed Azbeaz, "I want the truth and nothing but the truth—so you have loved before, that is well spoken, if so we have nought to say—we are silent—we praise Allah that we are not the cause of an injustice—no, we have been foolish—for in truth, love such as mine, out of a hump and a monkey face is repulsive to beauty as oil refuses to mix with the limpid stream."

"Believe her not, asylum of the universe," still vociferated the mother, "she is a perverse and wilful girl—she knows that she loves you, and only persists in her obstinacy to refuse a happiness too great for her, because she gets it for nothing."

"What she has said, she has said," returned Azbeaz, "we force no one," then turning again to the maiden he continned, "perhaps you know

that Kings are powerful men and can do mighty things. Now, if we knew who was this happy youth who was beloved by you, we might be of great use. Speak, the Shah is your friend, though you refuse him as a lover."

Here the maiden fell on her knees and implored that she might be no more questioned. "Your slave," she said crying through her tears, "is a speck of dirt as compared to a mountain—she is nothing—she is not worth your notice—allow her to sit in a corner and not be known—who, or what she likes or dislikes can be of no consequence to any one."

Azbeaz seeing the rage and violence which possessed the mother, insisted upon allowing entire freedom to the maiden to do whatever she found most agreeable to herself, and threatened if he heard of any violence being offered to her, that he would visit such offence with a serious punishment. He could not refrain, however, from upbraiding the mother with the falsehood of her brothers-in-law, and avowed it his intention to visit them with his displeasure.

"What do they suppose," said he, "that a

King is only to sit on his throne in order to be laughed at—no ! no ! without truth nothing is to be done—with it, all is straight forwards, and man lives to good purposes. Tell them to settle their minds into this conviction, that the Shah will burn their fathers."

Upon hearing these words, both mother and daughter with much wailing and many tears fell to beseeching him to pardon them, requesting him to reflect, that Kings were greater in bestowing mercy than in inflicting punishment. Azbeaz ceded to the prayers of the maiden, for he was softened by her truth and single-heartedness, and promised, that for the present, he would leave her uncles unmolested.

When he had dismissed the women, he then inquired whether the youth who was kind to him in his distress had been discovered, and soon after, to the King's great joy, he appeared and stood before him.

"Come forward," exclaimed Azbeaz.

The youth took off his shoes, made a low bow and advanced some steps.

"Come up hither," again he exclaimed.

The youth again advanced some steps, and

entered the very room in which the King was seated.

"Come and sit here," said the King, pointing to the very musnud upon which he sat.

The youth, with the greatest humility of mien and attitude, did as he was ordered, and when Azbeaz observed the astonishment expressed by those of his attendants who were near, he said:

"It is thus that I treat the man, who dared to show compassion, when every one else expressed contempt—who, unmindful of his own safety, only thought of my suffering, and who by so doing had nothing to gain but all to lose. Such a man is above all value—whatever honour he may receive, can in no wise add to his worth—the only recompense he really can receive is from Allah."

Upon this he ordered a robe of great value to be thrown over his shoulders, and a diamond headed dagger to be brought from the royal treasury and placed in his girdle. The youth abashed and ashamed at such unheard of distinction, could scarcely give utterance to his feelings of gratitude, at length, falling on his knee before the King he said:

"Why will your Highness sink the heart of his slave into the lowest depths of humility. He is and ever was the less than the least, and since it has been his happiness to meet with the approval of the centre of the universe, it is plain that his good fortune procceds more from the decrees of fate than from any merit of his."

"Speak no more," said Azbeaz, "we know that we do know, and do that which we approve. Now, as merit is rare, and as there is none without truth, and as I know you have the one, and, therefore, conclude you possess the other, sit down, and without delay relate to me your history, for my name is not 'little and white' if I do not make you feel what friendship means."

STORY OF KHODADAD.

The youth then overcoming his bashfulness, spoke as follows:

"May it please your Majesty, your slave was born under an evil destiny. He is ignorant

who is his father, and what is still more surprizing, he cannot say who was his mother —he is the meanest of God's creatures—he does not know to whom he belongs, by no ingenuity has he been able to discover whence he came—no one claims him, and he has lived by the pure and sole protection of that Providence, who watches over the life and being of those creatures whom he has called into existence. The only relatives I can claim are a family of puppies with whom I was found lying in one confused heap, and I am told, it was difficult to distinguish my infant cries from their earliest yelping. In truth, one summer morning, I was discovered by a negress lying upon a dunghill situated close to the walls of the palace, and almost equi-distant between the door of a mollah's house and that of a well known money-changer. This event was soon known in the *mahal* or district, and as all good Mussulmans were unanimous in the opinion that I ought to be taken care of, such being the injunction in the blessed Koran, it was determined that I should live, but then came the question who was to

possess me? The general opinion was, that I belonged to the house to which I was the nearest when found, therefore, it remained to be decided whether I belonged to the mollah or the money-changer. Neither of these worthies, when called upon to exercise the virtues of charity and benevolence, seemed at all pleased at the preference shewn them, and they contended that my interests being the interests of the whole community, saying I was the child of destiny, it was not fair that either of them should be entrusted with the duty of bringing me up—others opposed to this, that it was a great benefit to possess a human creature so circumstanced — it evidently was a gift from heaven, and, therefore, ought to be highly prized—besides a man child was worth a good price in the market at all times, and the expence of rearing would be well repaid by a future sale. After much discussion, it was at length determined that I should belong to him, to whose threshold I was the nearest when found, and in order to determine this, it was necessary to come to actual measurement.

From the dunghill to the mollah's threshold was fifty-three gez, and to the threshold of the money-changer fifty-two gez, thus, in my misfortune, I belonged to the money-changer by one gez. In the meanwhile, as long as this question was pending, I was running a fair chance of dying from want of sustenance. Wrapt up in the shirt of the negress, a kind hearted slave who belonged to the money-changer, I was crying my young heart out from sheer hunger, and it was only after the difficulty of who was my master was settled, that any demonstrations were made of supplying me with food.

The next question was, how was I to be named. The mollah grown generous from his good luck, said that I ought to be called Khodadad, or 'given by God,' but the money-changer smarting under the burthen imposed upon him, insisted upon my being called Nejes Cooli, 'the slave of uncleanness,' and thus I was issued into the world. This ill-omened name, which marked the feelings of my master towards me, became an excuse for all the future miseries which I was destined to en-

dure. I had fallen into the hands of one of the worst specimens of our nature in the shape of man. There never was installed, I verily believe, so mean a mind in so ill-favoured a body. Avarice was his ruling vice. The love of gold had entirely choaked every avenue of good feeling in his heart, and having now, so he flattered himself, expiated every sin by taking me in and adopting me as a child of charity, he felt that he was at liberty to beat me as he chose. He bore on his person all the outward marks of his penurious habits. Long and bony by nature, he became emaciated from scanty food. His haggard face was lighted up by a suspicious eye, that was ever on the watch, and his long skinny hands, seemed to be reserved for no other purpose than to handle gold. He never threw away a thing—he even kept the parings of his nails and the combings of his beard. His room was the deposit of old shoes, and tattered clothes, for he never treated himself to a new caba as long as the old one could hang together.

His household consisted of a wife, a daughter and the negress slave above mentioned. The daughter was an infant when I entered the family, and we grew up together. It is extraordinary that I grew at all considering the small quantity of food that was allowed for my use, but the negress was a kind-hearted creature and she often stinted herself for me: the daughter too, as she increased in stature, proved the very reverse of her father in disposition, for her whole pleasure consisted in giving, and she would rather have starved herself than see me want. As soon as my mind began to expand, the mollah who felt himself in duty bound to contribute to my well being, offered to educate me, and I was daily sent to his little school in the mosque, where I learnt my Alif Beh,* and where the first rudiments of the Koran were instilled into me. The mollah was a conscientious man, and, therefore, not sparing of his instructions; but as the food for the body which I received from the money-changer was not proportionate to that for the mind which I obtained from the mollah, I did

* The Arabic A. B, C.

not thrive in either. Indeed, had it not been for the affectionate attentions of Gulchin, the money-changer's daughter, I very probably should have sunk under the miseries I endured. Oftentimes did I determine, as I grew up, to run away in the hope of dying on the top of some mountain among wild beasts rather than endure the privations I was made to undergo, but I was always prevented by my affection for Gulchin. She grew up in every grace of body and mind, and as we advanced in years our hearts became united by ties stronger than those of brotherly and sisterly affection. We soon mutually revealed what we could no longer conceal, and we made engagements to love each other by vows of eternal constancy.

It is difficult to say in what capacity I was brought up. I was treated as a slave—frequently as a child of the house, and as I advanced in life, the money-changer placed more confidence in me than in any other human being, although he scarcely allowed me the necessaries of life. I was permitted to accompany him to his smallest of stalls in the bazaar where he carried on his traffic,

and when he was not otherwise engaged, he would teach me the tricks of his profession, particularly the art of clipping coin, and of extracting from the black stone on which he tried the purity of the gold which was given him to change, the powder which the metal left upon its surface. I was but a poor scholar, for I had no turn for money making in any shape, but I endeavoured to acquire his confidence, by never losing an opportunity of exerting myself for his interests. At the proper time, I was debarred seeing Gulchin, for she then became a close inmate of the harem, whilst I became a man—but at this juncture, her father died, and to my great grief, I lost the principal charm of my existence, that of seeing and conversing with her. She was conveyed to the house of her uncle, with whom she resided, and it was then with great difficulty that I could communicate with her. My forlorn situation obliged me to abandon all hopes of living near her, for it became necessary to seek some mode of gaining my bread, and the money-changer's brothers, of whom he had many, were neither of them willing

to inherit me as a possession. The mollah was still my friend, and he, good man, took me into his house, until I could provide myself with a situation. He possessed an intimate acquaintance in the Mirab, or the comptroller of water, an officer appointed by the government to superintend the acqueducts that supplied the city, distributing this necessary of life to the inhabitants according to their wants, and the extent of ground requiring irrigation. This oftentimes was a service of danger, particularly in seasons of drought, when the feuds and squabbles, which took place at the opening of the canals were frequently attended by bloodshed. He was in want of an assistant, and my friend the mollah, recommended me for the situation, as one able to read, and write and keep his accounts, as well as second him in time of need, being a strong active youth, which indeed I was. Having undergone the Mirab's inspection I was accepted, and soon after installed in my office. Provided with a spade as an emblem of office, I appeared in attendance upon my master, at the first distribution of the waters. I perceived

that I often should be called upon to exercise much inflexibility and resolution, for the gardeners and peasants with whom we had to deal, were a grasping, discontented set, always ready to set up claims to more than their due and enforcing them by something more than mere words. I was fortunate enough to acquire the confidence of my master, who having discovered that I could be trusted to manage matters alone, frequently left me to deal with the gardeners and peasants single-handed, and I found that more could be done by kind words and conciliation than by the violent language he indulged in.

I became quite reconciled to my new situation, particularly as it occasionally gave me opportunities of seeing my beloved Gulchin. But I could aspire to nothing more, for what could an unknown youth, poor, without parents, and born a slave, expect? I was not in a situation to marry, besides, I found that her uncles expected to derive great advantages from her beauty, which now became the talk of the city. However, I determined to persevere in my love, seeing that I was loved in

return, and to put my trust in Allah, hoping that destiny might throw something fortunate in our path—and my hopes were soon realized. The ensuing summer proved one of extreme drought, and water became so scarce, that fears were entertained lest the reservoirs would fail us. My master enjoined me to use great precaution in the distribution of the water, and, indeed, all my prudence and forbearance were required to meet the violence with which it was contended for.

One morning in the middle of summer when the heats were raging, and the drought was at its crisis, I went to open the canal, and, to my dismay, so scanty a stream appeared, that I deemed it advisable to foreclose the supply, rather than promote hopes not to be realized.

The gardeners were informed of this, and soon I was beset by a band of fierce men, who demanded their rights in a tone which told me how much their passions were roused, and made me apprehend the worst consequences. I answered in as conciliating a manner as possible, 'That there was no water,

that the springs were dry and the aqueduct useless.'

My appeal was retorted by language the most violent and abusive.

'What dirt are you eating?' said one. 'Are we men to stand by and hear such lies, when our gardens are dying for want of moisture, and ruin staring us in the face?'

'Give us water!' roared out a second, 'or by the twelve Imams, we will burn your father.'

'See this hand!' exclaimed a third, brandishing a dagger, 'I am not a Mussulman if I do not receive my quantum. You a man, indeed, to be assistant of the Mirab, and when you ought to be doing your duty, tell us that you will not act!'

I again explained the impossibility of meeting their demands. I could not produce water where none was. I was not a prophet. I could not perform a miracle.

My words were of no avail. I might as well have talked to walls. The abusive language of my opponents became more violent. I was threatened to be torn to pieces. I was ap-

proached with violent gestures. Still I bore all with patience; when one more arrogant than the rest coming on with a determination to do me harm, and having lifted up his arm to strike, I dealt him such a blow with my spade that it felled him to the ground.

Others then came on, I defended myself with vigour, keeping off the assailants as well as I was able, but I should have fallen a prey to their fury, had not the Mirab himself come to my rescue. His superior authority was a sufficient check, and quiet was restored. My conduct, however, was lauded in a manner quite beyond my merit. I was extolled as a hero, and my prowess having come to the ears of the commander of the King's body-guard, I was immediately taken from the service of the Mirab, who was loth to part with me, and enrolled among the royal *gholams*.

This was a piece of elevation for which I was not in the least prepared, and I accepted it with gratitude, as well as hope that it might lead to further advancement. In my exultation, I foresaw the possibility of becoming an accepted suitor to Gulchin.

It was reported that her uncles had recently refused the hand of a respectable tradesman; that their noses were well up, their hearts full of arrogance, and that they asserted she was too good for common mortals, a royal harem only being worthy of her. It was about this time, O King! that your slave had the good fortune to offer his humble assistance in relieving your miseries. See how great my good fortune! Who would have thought that so simple and natural an action would have led to the approval of a great Shah, and placed me in the envied position in which I now sit."

"You have spoken well, by Allah!" exclaimed Azbeaz, as soon as the youth had closed his lips. "You have spoken the truth, which, of all virtues, is the best as it is the rarest to the ears of a King. Now attend. In the first place, then, I shall call you Khodadad, for you, indeed, have been a gift of God to me—in the next place, if I enjoy any power as a King, I can raise the man I love best to whatever dignity I choose. I, therefore, create you a khan. So now you are Khodadad Khan! No more words."

Upon which the youth was about to kneel before Azbeaz, to make the proper prostrations, and kiss the hem of his cloak, when he was speedily prevented, desired to sit still and answer questions.

"Now, tell me," said Azbeaz, "tell me, where does the maiden live of whom you have spoken." Khodadad designated the precise spot. "And inform me," continued the King, "whether her uncles be not five old men, the most arrogant, insolent and ill-spoken old men in the world." Khodadad answered in the affirmative.

"Before another moment has elapsed," said the King, "you will straightway take with you one of the executioner's officers, proceed, and return bringing with you the said five old men, accompanied by the maiden, their niece. Conduct them hither without delay. Such are the King's commands under penalty of death."

Khodadad did as he was ordered. Taking with him an executioner's officer, he proceeded to the house, so well known to him as containing the object of his love, and knocking

at the door, he commanded it to be opened in the name of the King. The youngest old man with whom the maiden lived, came forward in great trepidation seeing a King's officer and an executioner at his doŏr, and enquired what might be the news.

"We are come," said Khodadad, "on the part of the Shah. Collect your brothers and bring hither your niece. You must all go before the royal presence."

"We have done nothing. In the name of Allah," said the uncle, "wherefore should we again go before the King? We have already been pardoned and dismissed."

"Words are useless when the King commands," said the executioner's officer, who well knew his office. "Quick!—be stirring—do not keep the Shah waiting. Call hither your brothers, bid your niece put on her veil—let us be going."

Gulchin having heard the words of the officer, ran with haste and in dismay, followed by her mother to the men's apartments, and seeing Khodadad, she could scarcely recover from her surprise at so unexpected an occurrence.

"Fear nothing!" said Khodadad. "I am with you. Hasten to fulfil the King's commands."

Her mother would have opened the battery of her volubility had she been allowed, but seeing that matters were really serious, she prepared to obey commands which could not be resisted.

At length, the five old men, their niece and her mother, having been marshalled into a procession, they were led before the royal presence. Azbeaz was seated on his musnud, and the moment they appeared, he ordered them to stand on one side, with the maiden in front whilst he placed Khodadad immediately opposite. Then addressing Gulchin in a kind and cheering manner, he said:

"Tell me, fair one, do you know that person?" pointing to Khodadad.

After much hesitation, she said: "Yes, I know him. He is the same of whom your slave ventured to speak to your Majesty."

Her mother upon this avowal, would have spoken, but she was prevented. Then turning to the old men, Azbeaz said:

"Do you too know this youth?"

"Yes," said one, "yes, we know him; he is Nejis Cooli, our late brother's slave."

"Yes," said another, "he was found on a dunghill among a litter of puppies."

"Yes," said a third, "he had the audacity to love our niece."

"Yes," said a fourth, "he became a brawler and killed a gardener."

"Yes," said the fifth, "he then thought himself a great man, and proposed for our niece."

"Now, fair one," turning to Gulchin, the King said, "now here is Nejis Cooli, the child of uncleanness—a slave—one born on a dunghill—the brother of dogs. One who has dared to love you—a brawler—a killer of gardeners—who has proposed marriage to you. Now I, the Shah, ask you in the name of Allah, will you have him for your husband."

The astounded maiden, the bewildered though entranced Gulchin, blushing through her veil, with an accent faltering from joyful excitement, answered in a firm voice. "Yes."

"What words are these?" exclaimed the mother no longer able to contain her anger.

"Why am I a mother, and why is she my daughter?"

"Hold your peace," exclaimed the King, and hear me. "You, who pretend to be a good mother—you, who with her uncles refused her to me, because, at the time I proposed, I was only a shoemaker, and who, now that I am a King, would force her to marry me. You, who have heard with your own ears, that she is attached to this youth with whom she was brought up as a sister, and now exclaim against their union. You wish to dispose of her, for your own purposes, not for her happiness—therefore, I hold there is no injustice in my decision—this man, pointing to Khodadad, who has proved himself resigned in adversity—humble in prosperity—constant to his first affections—true to his trust—brave in its defence—charitable without the hope of recompence and submissive to authority—this man who is now my friend, who will be my adviser and my confidant, whom I have raised to honors and will raise to still higher dignities—this man I give to your daughter. What have you to say against my decision?"

"We are your slaves! Whose dogs are we! Praise be to Allah we agree! Mashallah, mashallah!"

These and such like phrases and exclamations were immediately made, and nothing was said but in acquiescence to the royal commands. The news of this act of the King's judgment was soon spread abroad, and no one could discuss any other subject than his justice, and sagacity.

Khodadad as he had begun, so did he continue to enjoy the King's favour and confidence. Having been united to his beloved Gulchin, he lived but to evince his devotion to his benefactor—he became the eye and the anchor of the state. Azbeaz placed the most unlimited confidence in him—there was only one secret which he had never yet disclosed to him, nor even allowed him to know that it existed, that of the miraculous key—he felt a longing so to do, but his tongue was spell bound; whenever he wished to dilate on that subject so uppermost in his thoughts —the whole history of his strange adventures.

One day when particularly impelled to disclose his secret, he proposed ere he did so, to say his prayers at the royal mosque, but as he hated parade and was much oppressed by the ceremonial attendant upon a King, instead of mounting his horse, and calling out his guards and retinue of servants, he determined to walk. Escorted by Khodadad and a few attendants, he took his way through the bazaar with the intention of passing by his own stall and visiting the stepping stones, objects so full of recollections, and affording him a constant lesson upon the mutability of human affairs.

When he had proceeded thus far, looking towards his stall, he remarked that it was open, and approaching, to his surprise, he discovered his brother, bending over a last and his elbows squared, in the very act of making a shoe.

"Mashallah!" exclaimed Azbeaz, "this is well, wonderful are the works of God! Here am I a King, and Sakalchok a shoemaker!"

Sakalchok was so intent upon his business, that he did not remark who stood before him

—there he was on a low stool, surrounded by leather and lasts, stitching away with all the appearance of entire satisfaction. At length, looking up, he perceived his brother, to whom he said nothing, but the usual salutation of peace.

"Mashallah, mashallah!" exclaimed Azbeaz, "our eyes are enlightened—excellent, excellent—this is as it should be—you are become a man—you have met your destiny in a proper way."

"I hope I have too," said Sakalchok, "see here, drawing forth a shoe—see, here is a shoe, then, and I will defy the best shoemaker in the bazaar to produce a better—Sakalchok is somebody after all."

Azbeaz, who though he stood before his brother a King, yet, was still in heart a shoemaker, when thus appealed to on a point of his profession, forgetting his dignities asserted his pre-eminence in the craft, and taking up the shoe with a scrutinizing eye, examining every part of it, said:

"It is all very well for a jeweller to make such a shoe, but I could make a better with

my eyes shut. Why there are not half enough stitches, and the upper leather is cut off too much."

"What say you?" said Sakalchok, exhibiting the same arrogance of manner as a shoemaker which he had of old as an elder brother—"what say you, not stitches enough, here are more than ever you put into your shoes, and as for the upper-leathers, they are cut out from your own patterns."

"You are young at the craft," said Azbeaz, "or you would not talk thus—you surely are not going to put your skill, so recently acquired, in competition with mine, the result of years of hard labour, which has curved my back into the shape you see."

"I do not know how you acquired your skill," said Sakalchok with warmth and a taunting look, "but this I know, that that which takes the fool a whole life to acquire, is learnt by the clever man in a week. We understand things—whatever comes before us, our wit jumps upon, bestrides and bears it off;—I no sooner saw a shoe than I made one, and I will lay my beard against yours that I

will make a better shoe than you, such a one which you never saw, not even in a dream."

"*Be hey!*" exclaimed Azbeaz, "these are words, indeed! you make a shoe better than I can! you may be my elder brother, that is true, and I can't help it, but that you should make a better shoe, I'll sooner believe that the end of the world is at hand."

"Come sit down and try," said Sakalchok, "here is a last, here is leather."

"And wherefore not!" said the King, "am I a man to make pretensions and not fulfill them? give me the stool and let me sit."

"By this time, the brothers had entirely lost sight of their relative positions, and Azbeaz forgetful of his dignities, would forthwith have wielded the awl in the presence of the whole city, if Khodadad whose intelligent mind understood the fitness of things, had not reminded his King and patron, that the mosque was waiting for his reception, and that, perhaps, it might be as well to perform his devotions before he made the shoe.

"True you have said," answered the King, "what is woven in the cloth will shew itself at

the edge; the truth is that I shall ever be a bad King, but as I believe in Allah, I here declare that I am a good shoemaker."

Thus terminated this strange scene, in which truth so much prevailed, that Azbeaz sighed, as he proceeded to the performance of his royal duties and turned his back upon his old habits.

Sakalchok, on the other hand, who had witnessed his brother's elevation with envy, had pondered over it with a heavy heart, and had come to the conclusion that, perhaps, the shortest cut to a throne was a previous seat on a cobbler's bench, making a virtue of necessity, he had adopted that alternative, which though, perhaps, not the means of restoring him to fortune and situation, would secure him a livelihood accompanied by the good will of the King.

And well did he calculate, for Azbeaz was so well pleased with his brother's conduct, that ere he left the mosque, he had with his own hand written an order for the restoration of all Sakalchok's possessions.

Upon their return, Azbeaz whose heart had

expanded at Sakalchok's docility, was softened by prayer, and whose affection for his young friend had increased tenfold in proportion, as he became better acquainted with his virtues, could no longer resist the desire of unfolding to him the secret of the miraculous key. Therefore, taking him into his private closet, and ordering every one but Khodadad from before him, he addressed him thus:

"Khodadad, my son, for I look upon you as such, I have nothing to conceal from you, all I have is yours—you once assisted me in adversity when shunned by every one else; owing to your care, probably, my life was saved—by the decrees of destiny from being a mechanic I am become a King, by means as strange as they were irresistable. The instrument producing my elevation is in my possession, with it I can command a power which renders me the most powerful potentate in the world—no throne, however guarded, could withstand the armies I might pour forth. But ambition has no charms for me, this power will lie dormant as long as I live—I exist but for peace, and in the hope of doing some little

good. I would that others were exalted before me—to me the trappings and circumstance of royalty are oppressive. I have determined to prove the extent of my friendship, by confiding to you the secret of my power; but to you alone must it be confined, were others acquainted with it, my peace would be endangered, and I should become a prey to the intrigues of designing men. I can confide in you Khodadad, the same fidelity you have hitherto shewn, you will I'm sure continue to exercise, and then if aught should happen to me, if death were to take me away suddenly, I feel my secret will be in safe hands, and in the possession of one who, I am certain, will not abuse the power he will be able to command."

So saying, he drew from the secret place the mysterious key.

"This key," said he, "possesses the astonishing quality of dragging a person forward whether he will or not, until it discloses wonders which cannot be believed until seen. It has made a King of me and

that is saying enough; here—take it in hand and you will judge whether what I say be true or not."

Upon which he desired Khodadad to take up the key, when, in so doing, the colour of the youth changed, and his features assumed a new expression. Feeling the communicated pressure, he fain would have immediately walked away in the direction, which it seemed to persuade him to go, and, indeed, made some hasty steps towards the door of the apartment, to the astonishment and even alarm of the King.

"Stay! stay, for heaven's sake!" said he, "this is no child's play—if it once gets you clear of the city, you will never stop until you become King yourself."

Khodadad had sufficient command over himself to let the key drop from his hand, which having done, he bent forward and inspected it with open mouth and out-stretched hands, looking like one demented, when, at length, he exclaimed, "wonderful! wonderful! wonderful!!"

"You may, indeed, exclaim wonderful!"

said Azbeaz, "I said not half enough of its surprising qualities."

"No, indeed," said the youth, "I am become mad with astonishment; wherefore, oh my master, have you disclosed to me this secret! This is the wonder of wonders—let me depart ere the temptation be too strong and I take it up again."

"Go, my child," said Azbeaz, "you are now possessed of my great secret, but as you love me, as you fear Allah disclose it to no one—Go."

Khodadad retired from the King's presence, whilst he, the King, replaced the key whence he had taken it, not without some misgiving concerning the wisdom of the step he had just taken.

"The youth is trustworthy," he thought within himself, "I would stake my head on that—he loves me and is grateful—of that too I am sure. He never can wish to be a King, at least, not yet—he is too young, and by the time I am old, he may become King and welcome."

But Khodadad's whole nature had been

strongly affected by what he had seen and undergone—he left Azbeaz wrapt in deep meditation, and would willingly have given half his existence for permission to follow the fortunes of the key, whithersoever it might have led him.

After his marriage with Gulchin, the King had bestowed upon him one of the courts of the palace, as a habitation, and there he was now established. His beautiful wife entirely sympathized in his feelings of gratitude to the Shah for all his kindnesses, and considering the favour with which he beheld Khodadad, there was every prospect of the happy couple enjoying a continuance of encreasing prosperity.

When she saw her husband return with a clouded brow and a face expressive of care and abstraction, she became alarmed, and quickly ceding to apprehension, she felt that he might have lost the King's favour.

"What has happened in the name of Allah?" said she, with affectionate concern in her looks, "say—say, for I am afraid."

"Nothing, my soul," said Khodadad, "as you live there is nothing."

"Then why these looks? I am sure something has happened—you must tell me," said the affectionate Gulchin, "women are not easily mistaken."

Again Khodadad repeated, "*Bir chey yok*, there is nothing!"

Again she pressed him, and again he repeated his answer. But in vain did he assure his wife that his wits were undisturbed, and that his brain was in a healthy state, still the miraculous key so entirely occupied his mind, that he walked about like one in his sleep. At length his wife's importunities became so great, that in his own defence, he was obliged to own that there was a mystery—a strange occurrence had taken place, which he was not at liberty to disclose—in short, he asserted that he possessed a state secret, which he was bound, by an oath, to the Shah, his benefactor, never to disclose.

Gulchin was a woman to the very extremity of her longest tress of hair, and she became

determined to know the secret. She first met her husband's disclosure by a long silence—the only words she occasionally uttered were, "a secret!—so, there is a secret!" and this she said with a look so sad and reproachful, that Khodadad was much disturbed by it. The confidence which, to this moment, had been the charm of their existence, was lost. There existed something which one of them knew and was unknown to the other. That little circumstance became sufficient to endanger their happiness, and their once joyous and unrestrained intercourse was now destroyed. Khodadad loved his wife with rapture and devotedness, but he also loved his master, and felt himself bound to obey him, under any circumstances however perplexing.

When the secret was fresh in his mind, he was sternly determined to allow nothing—not even the well-being of his wife, to make him disclose it. But when its first effects had passed away, and when day after day, he was afflicted by the reproachful looks of his Gulchin, and by her

evident misery at his apparent want of confidence, he gradually began to argue with himself whether it might not be possible to disclose it to her, and still preserve his integrity.

Gulchin's depression of spirits, at length began to exhibit its effects upon her person. She became thin and pale; she fretted, was peevish, and, in truth, her conduct so caused Khodadad to feel how much his happiness depended upon hers, that the sturdiness of his integrity was step by step undermined, until, at length, it broke down altogether.

"I will tell her," said he to himself; "if she really loves me, the secret will be as safe in her custody as in mine." Accordingly he called her to him, and said: "O my soul, Gulchin, you have seen to what extent my heart has been burnt up, and how greatly my liver has dropped. I too have remarked that your countenance has turned from me, and that little by little, we have become two. This is not as it should be. It has pleased Allah to send us misfortune. We have been

visited by a great secret. It has destroyed our confidence in each other, and we who ought to be like two kernels in one almond, are separated like the shells thereof. I can no longer bear this state. If you love me as you ought, my secret will be your secret, as my heart is your heart. Therefore, Gulchin, O my soul! I will divulge it."

At these words the drooping wife cheered up, and assumed all the smiles and blandishments of the devoted mistress. She ran to her husband, and kissing his hands, his shoulders and his knees, said:

"You are again my Khodadad! Now you are, indeed, the same you once were. What can you mean by doubting my power to keep a secret? Are not man and wife one? Then what one knows, the other should know—what one likes, the other should like—what one hates, the other should hate. Thanks be to Allah and the Prophet! the days of Gulchin's trials are over, and again, Mashallah! we shall see prosperity."

Upon which the affectionate pair embrac-

ing, Khodadad from beginning to end, related the history of the key. Gulchin, as he proceeded, could not discover why the facts which he related should be so much a matter of secresy. Every one in general terms, was acquainted with the miracle which had placed Azbeaz upon the throne, although, perhaps, it was not known by what particular agency it had been effected. She, however, continued to give the utmost attention to her husband's words, and when he said, "Now hear!" she redoubled that attention.

"Now hear!" said he. "This key, this extraordinary key is in the Shah's possession—he shewed it me—he placed it in my hand—I felt its influence—I almost became mad with excitement—I would have run with it to the end of the world—it invited me to elope by its most significant pressure—"

"And suppose you had!" exclaimed Gulchin. "What would have happened?"

"I should have returned, the King."

"The King!" she exclaimed, in a voice denoting profound astonishment. "The King!"

again she said, pausing with all the inward thought which accompanies the knowledge of a great secret.

"Aye," said Khodadad, "I should be the King."

"And where is the key now?" said Gulchin, with faltering lips and an excited expression of countenance.

"Where?" said Khodadad, as if afraid of allowing the surrounding air to hear where it was concealed. "Am I to tell you where?"

"And wherefore not?" said Gulchin. "What have we to do with the key? But I should greatly like to see it."

"I should be afraid to feel it again," said Khodadad. "for I will not answer for myself. You have no conception of its all-powerful influence. I could scarcely prevent myself from running off with it, even in the presence of my King and benefactor. What would it be then, were he not present to check me by his presence?"

"But I might just look at it," said his wife "there can be no harm in that."

"No, perhaps, not," said Khodadad, "for after all, it does not differ from any other key in appearance—and in that lies the temptation—it looks nothing at first, but when you come to the touch and the sentiment, then, like many other temptations, it becomes irresistible. If you love me, my life, do not ask me to approach nearer to it than we are at present, for as sure as you do, you will see me flee from your presence, to go heaven knows whither, conducted by the powers of jins and peris to the realms of mystery and darkness."

"But to come back the King!" exclaimed Gulchin, with unwonted animation, at the same time scarcely venturing to trust her lips with the words.

"As you love Allah! as you respect yourself! By my soul and by the King's salt, never repeat such words," said Khodadad. "We poor miserable mortals, yesterday the meanest of the earth, to-day basking in the sunshine of power and royalty, shall we venture to breathe a thought so full of wickedness? Shall we

think of becoming King, when but a short time since we looked upon our existence as a misfortune, whilst we now owe all our happiness to him who is the King. Heaven and Allah forbid!"

"True," said Gulchin, with compunction in the tone of her voice and a down-cast eye. "Still," she added, "he was like us before he became the Shah. One morning he was perched on a three-legged stool, stitching a shoe, the next he was seated on a golden throne, pronouncing judgment of life and death."

"*He* acted through ignorance," said Khodadad, "*we* know all—there is the difference."

"But we intend nothing," said his wife, "Allah forbid! Could I but see the key, I should be satisfied."

Upon this, the conversation came to an end for the present, but it had laid the foundation of a long train of thought in both their minds so subversive of their peace and contentment, that they were no longer the same persons. They never met, but Gulchin was sure to lead